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SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION:  
PAPER TIGER OR REGIONAL POWERHOUSE?

by

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September 2005

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The results are contradictory. For Russia, participation in the SCO reflects an identity driven interest. Russia views its membership in the SCO as the means by which it may regain super power status. China's participation in the SCO is driven by its energy concerns as a means to achieve long-term economic security.

Though the American presence in Central Asia after September 11, 2001 has complicated both Russia's and China's pursuit of these interests, the SCO should not be viewed as a defensive alliance against the U.S. Instead, the SCO resembles a dysfunctional international regime created in order to avert the threat of revolutionary upheaval in the Central Asian on the one hand and to pursue common interest in long-term economic growth through increased cooperation and collaboration.

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**SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION:  
PAPER TIGER OR REGIONAL POWERHOUSE?**

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## I. TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA: A WHIFF OF A NEW “GREAT GAME”?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is developing into a major regional institution in the heart of Eurasia. Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan formed this organization in 2001. The 2005 inclusion of India, Pakistan and Iran in an “observer” status role increased speculation over the future implications of such a regional grouping, especially as a challenge to America’s position in the international system and the beginning of a new “Great Game.”<sup>1</sup> Referring to the existence of Russian, Chinese and U.S. interests in Central Asia as a new “Great Game” rests on a simplified assumption that these actors are competitors in a global race for power. To make any predictions about the SCO, one must look at the other factors shaping Russian and Chinese participation in this regional organization. To avoid miscalculating how an organization such as the SCO will operate within the international system, one must examine factors contributing to Russian and Chinese foreign policy behaviors in Central Asia, such as identity driven interests, perceptions of threat, as well as security and economic motivations. By disregarding these variables of analysis, one will fail to appreciate that Russia’s and China’s foreign policies are driven by domestic imperatives, rather than the power politics familiar from the Cold War paradigm.

Many scholars have tried to characterize the SCO since its inception, but during the organization’s short history, it has largely remained an enigma. Characterizations of the SCO range from a security organization to a regional economic forum, or as an anti-terrorism coalition. Another common portrayal of the SCO is as a Russian- and Chinese-led alliance created to counter U.S. hegemony. These attempts to classify the SCO raise several important questions about the Central Asian region. What chance does the SCO have of becoming a viable organization? Is the SCO just the latest in a long line of

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<sup>1</sup> For press coverage of this event see: Valery Agarkov and Oral Karpishev, “Russian Spokesman: India, Iran, Pakistan To Join SCO as Observers,” *Moscow ITAR-TASS* in English, 4 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050604029012; “China Supports Pakistan, Iran, India Becoming SCO Observers,” *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 7 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050607000132; and “Transcript of PRC FM Spokesman News Conference on 7 June 05,” *Beijing Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China WWW-Text* in Chinese, 7 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050607000171.

organizations pretending to unify and integrate Central Asia? Does the seductive presumption of a looming battle for control of Eurasia smell of a new “Great Game” and great power rivalry, which could lead to an anti-U.S. alliance? Does the real significance of the SCO rest in a consensus among like-minded elites faced with another perceived threat? Does active participation by Russia and China guarantee regional security and regime survival of the current political elites in Central Asia? Finally, is there something unique about the SCO that reflects an attempt at resolving dilemmas of common interests, as well as seeking long-term cooperation on a number of key regional issues?

Answering these questions requires knowing how its 2 key players, Russia and China, view the SCO. In order to identify their primary motivations regarding the SCO, one must investigate how the two countries define their interests. The current geopolitical and geoeconomic relations between Russia, China and the U.S., may constrain the definition of these interests, but they do not fully determine them. The inquiry therefore centers on what Russia and China believe their individual interests in Central Asia are, before analyzing how they view the SCO. In particular, one must consider how identity driven interests, perceptions of threat, and economic interests shape cooperation and create tensions. How do the Russians and Chinese view Central Asia as a region and the SCO as an organization?

The results of this thesis are contradictory. Initially, both Russia and China sought to reduce tensions and hostilities prevalent during the Cold War era. The SCO offered a cooperative solution for common dilemmas. However, over time the SCO reflects something different for each country. This thesis argues that post-Cold War internal and external events forced Russia to examine its national identity, which influenced its interests in the SCO. The SCO supports the current Russian elite consensus of a Eurasian identity—an East-West bridge—and offers Russia the best chance of returning to the “status” of a great power. The SCO provides the means (e.g. security and economic opportunities) to this end. In contrast, the evidence shows that economic interests are driving China’s participation in the SCO. For China, regional security is an important first step in achieving sustained economic growth. China has used the SCO to enhance its regional influence and prestige by offering bilateral economic deals to the Central Asian republics at Russia’s expense. The economic growth

of the Chinese interior is a vital step toward ensuring China's sustained economic growth, access to vital resources necessary for long-term economic security, and thus, its national security.

To reach these conclusions this thesis is organized into five sections. First, it begins by reviewing the relevant international relations literature that might provide explanations for the existence of the SCO. Second, it will examine the history of the SCO, from its beginnings as the Shanghai-Five to its modern-day form. Third, it will explore how Russia views its Central Asian regional policies and bilateral relations with China and the Central Asian republics after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> Fourth, it will explore why China pursued its Central Asian regional policies and bilateral relations with Russia and the Central Asian republics. Finally, the thesis discusses the implications of Russia's and China's interest in the SCO for U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia.

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<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the usage of the term "Central Asia republics" or "Central Asian states" refers to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, which are members of the SCO. Turkmenistan, under President Saparmurat Niyazov, has remained committed to its neutral stance and non-alignment policy, and thus, is not lumped into this categorical reference.

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## **II. THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

What explains Russian and Chinese contemporary cooperation in Central Asia, and in particular within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) framework? Specifically, what are Russia's and China's motivations for agreeing to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship with the Central Asian Republics? In order to begin addressing these questions it is necessary to understand what the SCO is, as well as what theory accounts for the origins and sustainment of the organization. In this endeavor, this chapter will identify several possible motivations underlying Russian and Chinese foreign policy interests in Central Asia, which in turn might best capture the creation and evolution of the SCO.

At both scholarly and popular levels, one can find an abundance of explanations for the creation of the SCO. Some have suggested that the SCO is a defensive alliance and is rooted in the realities of the post-Cold War international system. According to this argument, Russia and China have sought to counter U.S. hegemonic actions and aggressive foreign policies. In particular, Russia and China perceive American interference in sovereign states, without the coordination of the United Nations' (UN) Security Council, as a blatant disregard of international norms of behavior. The critical events that perpetuate this negative reaction to U.S. foreign policies include NATO's 1998 Air War over Serbia and Kosovo, and NATO's eastward expansion into Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Central Asia. Other events such as the U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty and the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq would further bolster this argument. If the SCO is an alliance and the balance of threat theory is operating, one would expect to see evidence of Russia and China continuing to view the U.S. as the threat. One would also expect to see statements from Russian and Chinese elites identifying the U.S. as the chief threat.

Those that speculate the SCO is a regional security architecture or a “concert” system postulate that the member states are interested in collaborating with each other to

maintain peace and stability preventing domestic political turmoil from terrorism or the prospects of more “colored” revolutions. Key events supporting this argument would be sources of domestic or regional terrorism, separatism, extremism, and irredentism, or external events such as 9/11 and other worldwide sources of terrorism associated with radical Islamic fundamentalism. If the SCO is a “concert” of Central Asia then one might expect to see the member states attempting to maintain the *status quo* by implementing “omnibalancing” policies necessary to ensure regime survivability against internal and external threats.

Others point to the increased pressures of globalization and the impacts of the 1998 Asian financial crisis as a primary driver in the development of the SCO. Under these conditions, the SCO can be viewed as an international economic regime based on increased interdependence among the SCO members. The SCO is a logical consequence of member states’ interest in reducing transaction costs, provide for regional development and prosperity. If the SCO is an international economic regime, then one should see the members acting for the regional collective good and general welfare by foregoing short-term gains. One would also expect to see the SCO members seeking greater cooperation and collaboration for solving dilemmas of common interests. In this scenario, Russia and China would restrain themselves from using compulsory strategies to limit the choices of the SCO’s weaker members.

Others argue that changes in identity can be the basis for the articulation of new interests. If true, then one should examine how interests form by considering how domestic and international events may have driven states to reexamine their identities. This approach would consider all the events previously mentioned as having an impact on how Russia and China view the SCO. Finally, if the SCO were a sign of changes in Russian and Chinese identities and interests, then one would expect to see the SCO reflecting the codification of these interests in the development of a common working institution.

In truth, a combination of the events cited above has caused Russia and China to reexamine their identities and interests in the post-Cold War environment. Domestic and international events have, and are continuing to shape, Russia’s and China’s views of

what the SCO means to them. The impact of these events has shaped how Russia and China designed their foreign policies, both regionally and internationally. In Russia's case, international and regional events have caused the political elite to reexamine the Russian identity. The "Eurasian" identity now shapes how Russia sees its interests and outlines its foreign policy orientation with the ultimate goal of moving beyond its current status as a regional great power to once again being a superpower. For China, international and regional events are also important, in shaping their regional identity, but it is their economic interests, which primarily drives its foreign policy in Central Asia. The next four sections will examine each of these theories in detail by examining their assumptions and predictions for the establishment and purpose of the SCO.

## B. BALANCE OF THREAT – IS THE SCO AN ALLIANCE?

In order to determine if the SCO is an alliance, this thesis will analyze Russian and Chinese choices based upon Stephen A. Walt's balance of threat theory. Balance of threat is a revision of neorealist balance of power theory. The balance of threat approach highlights that a state's material factors and capabilities are still important, but must be weighted by perceptions of other states' intentions. According to Walt, conventional wisdom maintains that alliances form as a response to power, however he argues instead that states "ally with or against the most *threatening* power."<sup>3</sup> Walt considers four areas that might affect calculations of threat, and thus, alliance formation and partnership choices: aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability and offensive intentions.

Aggregate power is based upon a state's total resources that might produce either balancing or bandwagoning tendencies.<sup>4</sup> States, according to Walt will also align in response to threats from proximate power. Because the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. Proximate power, like aggregate power, might also produce either balancing (i.e. alliances resembling checkerboards) or bandwagoning tendencies (i.e. "spheres of influence").<sup>5</sup> Additionally, "states with large offensive capabilities are more likely to

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985), 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

provoke an alliance than those who are either militarily weak or capable of only defending.”<sup>6</sup> Weak and vulnerable states may be forced to bandwagon because allies are not near and there is little hope of resistance. However, states that have the means to resist will likely opt for alliances against states with greater offensive power. Walt expects “great powers will balance more vigorously while weak states [will] seek protection by bandwagoning more frequently.”<sup>7</sup> In this case, Walt predicts a world of tight alliances with few neutral states.<sup>8</sup>

Walt’s most critical variable in determining how states form alliances is “offensive intentions.”<sup>9</sup> For Walt, it is intentions rather than power which play the crucial role in determining the choice of allies and why particular coalitions form with particular partners. According to Walt, “even states with rather modest capabilities may trigger a balancing response if they are perceived as especially aggressive.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, “the more aggressive or expansionist a state appears, the more likely it is to trigger an opposing coalition.”<sup>11</sup> As to whether balancing or bandwagoning is the dominate tendency, Walt finds “[f]or states that matter, balancing is the rule: they will join forces against the threats posed by the power, proximity, offensive capabilities, and intentions of others.”<sup>12</sup>

Based on the foregoing, if the balance of threat theory best describes Russia’s and China’s motivation for participating in the SCO, then the SCO would be a product of a perceived threat from U.S. hegemonic actions. One would expect to see balancing and tighter coordination and cooperation between Russia and China in a defensive effort against U.S. actions and presence in Central Asia, and they would also perceive the U.S as threatening in its intent and capabilities.<sup>13</sup> Thus, an imbalance of threat will cause an

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<sup>6</sup> Walt, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid..

<sup>9</sup> Critical in the sense that is his amendment of Waltz.

<sup>10</sup> Walt 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>13</sup> In addition, one would expect to see Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, if feeling threatened by U.S. foreign policy, to bandwagon with China and Russia against the U.S.

alliance response (e.g. SCO) against the most threatening state (e.g. U.S.). Evidence of such threat perceptions are needed to support this argument and will be explored in the empirical chapters.

This argument, although attractive, explains little about the creation of the SCO, but instead might offer insights into its continuation. There is little question that the U.S. in the 1990s and today remains a global superpower. However, after the events of September 11, 2001, Russia under President Vladimir Putin's leadership, sought better relations with the U.S. based on a common perceived threat of radical Islamists and transnational terrorists. Russia remained mute and on the sidelines while the U.S. established military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to launch military operations against the Taliban-led Afghan government and Al-Qaeda. The Chinese reaction to 9/11 was supportive of America's right to respond against the sources of the attack in Afghanistan.

Although Walt's balance of threat theory contains important insights, it does not adequately explain how internal and external non-state actors affect perceptions of threats to the security of the state. "Omnibalancing" may offer additional insights, especially within Central Asia.

### C. OMNIBALANCING – IS THE SCO A “CONCERT”?

Another explanation for the SCO framework is rooted in security, not from other states, but rather from non-traditional threats such as terrorism, separatism, and extremism. This explanation derives from the early stages of the SCO's development in pursuit of countering the "Three Evils"—international terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism. Alternatively, another source of threat may be emerging to support an omnibalancing explanation for the SCO's necessity. The SCO may indeed reflect the proverbial tip of the iceberg as a visible expression of conservatism in Central Asia. The post-Soviet status quo has obviously began to strain under the pressures of "colored" revolutions, especially after the Georgian "Rose", Ukrainian "Orange" and Kyrgyzstani "Tulip" revolutions. As one analyst put it, "[t]he increased commitment to the SCO is a

natural reaction, a huddling of harried elites who have seen the waters around them rise and are intent, now more than ever, on not rocking the boat.”<sup>14</sup>

These arguments might postulate that the SCO is a modern day “concert” of Central Asia created to preserve the *status quo* of the Soviet-legacy regimes. This view is centered on a shared perception of threat to domestic security derived from the destabilizing forces or revolutionary ideas generated from within or from outside the region. These threats could serve to strike at the foundations of the Central Asia regimes legitimacy. This argument would indicate that the SCO countries’ ruling elite have a vested interest in maintaining that status quo and have a common perception of threat, whether internal or external, to the region.

While Walt examines how states at the systemic level view other states as threats based on their aggregate power, proximity, offensive capabilities and offensive intentions when choosing their allies, Stephen R. David amends this view to also consider internal adversaries.<sup>15</sup> David agrees with the central assumption of the balance of power—that threats will be resisted—but focuses on Third World state leaders’ need to counter all threats, whether from other states or domestic sources. “Omnibalancing” combines levels of analysis—system-level structure with domestic politics—as a refinement of realist balance of power theory and of neorealism. Specifically, David’s omnibalancing theory considers how internal and external threats to state leadership directly affect how states choose their partners. Omnibalancing shares realism’s argument that “international politics focuses on power, interests, and rationality,” but “asserts that realism must be broadened to examine internal threats in addition to focusing on external threats and capabilities (that is, structural arguments), and that the leader of the state rather than the state itself should be used as the level of analysis.”<sup>16</sup>

For David, “the most powerful determinant of Third World alignment behavior is the rational calculation of Third World leaders as to which outside power is most likely to

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<sup>14</sup> Kimmage, “Central Asia; SCO – Shoring Up the Post-Soviet Status Quo.”

<sup>15</sup> A key distinction between Walt and David is Walt expects small states to bandwagon with great powers, while David predicts small states to balance against threats.

<sup>16</sup> Steven R. David, “Explaining Third World Alignment,” *World Politics*, 43 no. 2 (January 1991): 236-237.

do what is necessary to keep them in power.”<sup>17</sup> He offers three main points in readdressing neorealist balance of power theory. “First, rather than just balance against threats or power, leaders of states will appease—that is, align with—secondary adversaries so that they can focus their resources on prime adversaries.”<sup>18</sup> Second, in order to counter the more pressing and dangerous threats David contends that when states seek partners, they will appease secondary threats and focus their energies on their most dangerous domestic opponents. He offers that, while this might appear as states demonstrating bandwagoning behavior, they are actually balancing through modifications in their alignment positions so that they can conserve strength and focus against their primary threat.<sup>19</sup> Finally, by engaging in such alignment strategies, Third World leaders’ primary motivation is regime survivability; and will seek to protect and defend themselves at the expense of the state.<sup>20</sup>

In essence, David’s theory rests on the assumption that these leaders will do what they must for “political and physical survival,” by balancing between internal and external threats. Central to his theory is the assumption that these “leaders are weak and illegitimate and that the stakes in domestic politics are very high.”<sup>21</sup> David also suggests that in the Third World there is an interrelationship between internal and external threats. In particular, that regime leaders, as well as domestic “insurgents commonly seek outside support to advance their interests.”<sup>22</sup>

For cases where the principle threat to the regime leadership is from other states, balance of threat theory indeed applies. However, it is only prudent to consider whether and how internal threats play a prominent role. Omnibalancing is especially insightful when, in determining the threat, states perceive the threat as being sponsored by an outside power, as well as how non-state actors and ideas might play a critical role in examining perceptions of threat. A key consideration for neorealist balance of threat and

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<sup>17</sup> David, “Explaining Third World Alignment,” 235.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 240.

omnibalancing theories is that “leaders prefer to align with states that ensure their hold on power rather than with states that may increase their power, but at the risk of endangering their survival.”<sup>23</sup> There is a key distinction between these two neorealist theories for how states make alignment choices. Leaders operating under a balance of threat system will ask, “What state has the greatest intention of threatening us?” Whereas “omnibalancing assumes the decision maker asks, ‘Which outside power is most likely to protect *me* from the internal and external threats (as well as combinations of both) that I face?’”<sup>24</sup>

If the SCO reflects omnibalancing, then there should be evidence that the SCO either was created or is sustained for preventing weak state contraction. The key area to analyze lies in how Russia and China have sought to maintain the status quo of regimes in Central Asia. In this respect, one should look for examples of SCO members allying against domestic threats rather than external threats. This explanation’s primary merit lies in identifying whether internal stability is the glue holding the SCO together that then enables analysts to assess the durability of such a basis for cooperation.

#### D. INTERDEPENDENCE – IS THE SCO AN INTERNATIONAL REGIME?

Neoliberalism offers an alternative framework for addressing state behavior. Interdependence theories strive to explain cooperation among states.<sup>25</sup> Interdependence means more collaborative action is needed for solving problems of common interests. Neoliberals emphasize that conditional cooperation can be achieved as states increase their interactions. By pursuing multiple mutual interactions, states can reinforce cooperation as the best long-term strategy for reducing security competition.<sup>26</sup> This “conditional cooperation among states may evolve in the face of international anarchy and mixed interests through strategies of reciprocity, extended time horizons, and reduced verification and sanctioning costs.”<sup>27</sup> Neoliberals argue that international

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<sup>23</sup> David, “Explaining Third World Alignment,” 244.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>25</sup> The seminal work remains Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977).

<sup>26</sup> Joseph M. Grieco, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism” in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, David A. Baldwin, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 122.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

regimes reduce the transaction costs associated with these interactions. The suggestion is that a “[h]egemonic power may be necessary to establish cooperation among states ... but it may endure after hegemony with the aid of institutions.”<sup>28</sup>

Neoliberalism argues, “that growing economic interdependence, the diffusion of new technologies and ideas, and the awareness of common transnational problems diminish the importance of borders and create transnational actors and a demand for international cooperation.”<sup>29</sup> Stated briefly, “states can no longer solve a number of issues through unilateral action alone. Common problems demand a pooling of resources and even the creation of regimes to facilitate cooperation.”<sup>30</sup> According to Paul Kubicek, this often “may occur regionally, since nations in the same region may share a variety of concerns, possess similar cultures and social structures, and have greater contact with each other.”<sup>31</sup>

Regimes, unlike alliances, “must be understood as something more than temporary arrangements that change with every shift in power or interests.”<sup>32</sup> International regimes are “defined as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given issue area of international relations.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, “regime-governed behavior must not be based solely on short-term interests.”<sup>34</sup> International regimes help reduce the costs and increase the benefits of collective action by fostering a sense of general obligation in which reciprocity is emphasized. Under these conditions, states “will sacrifice short-term calculations of interests with the expectation that other actors will reciprocate in the

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<sup>28</sup> Grieco, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism,” 124.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Kubicek, “Regionalism, Nationalism and Realpolitik in Central Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 4 (June 1997): 639. Paul J. Kubicek is an Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations at Koc University, Istanbul Turkey

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen D Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2, International Regimes (Spring, 1982): 186. Stephen D. Krasner is Professor of political Science at Stanford University

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 187.

future, even if they are not under a specific obligation to do so.”<sup>35</sup> Stephen D. Krasner postulates that “[i]t is the infusion of behavior with principles and norms that distinguishes regime-governed activity in the international system from more conventional activity, guided exclusively by narrow calculations of interests.”<sup>36</sup>

Regimes are not an ends unto themselves, but can affect outcomes and behavior, driven by power and interests.<sup>37</sup> Regimes make international competition less violent and insecure, and cooperation more beneficial, as well as they may change states’ perceptions of their interests. In the international system, “the basic function of regimes is to coordinate state behavior to achieve desired outcomes in particular issue-areas.”<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the question remains as to the stability of a regime when actor preferences change. Susan Strange contends “All those international arrangements dignified by the label regime are only too easily upset when either the balancing of bargaining power or the perception of national interest (or both together) change among those states who negotiate them.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, if short-term narrowly defined security issues can take a back seat to shared long-term aspirations of economic development, then the SCO might be characterized as an international regime and not a temporary alliance.

Krasner considers five causal variables for regime development: egoistic self-interest, political power, norms and principles, habit and custom, and knowledge. This analysis will strictly focus on the two most prominent explanations for regime development: egoistic self-interest and political power. Here Krasner seeks to answer two questions. First, “[w]hat is the relationship between basic causal factors and regimes?”<sup>40</sup>, and second, “[w]hat are the conditions that lead to regime creation, persistence, and dissipation?”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” 187.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Strange, “Cave! Hic Dragones: A Critique of Regime Analysis,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2, International Regimes (Spring, 1982): 487. Strange is presenting a realist critique of regime theory here, not what regime theorists argue. Regime theorists counter that transaction costs and reduced uncertainty lead states to maintain regimes even when the distribution of power shifts.

<sup>40</sup> Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” 195.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Egoistic self-interest is the prevailing explanation behind the creation of international regimes. This implies a Hobbesian world, where self-interests matter most and revolves around economic considerations. Here a state's only consideration is its "desire to maximize one's own utility function where that function does not include the utility of another party."<sup>42</sup> From this interest-oriented perspective, actors can either be constrained or unconstrained by the regime. Dilemmas of common interests can be resolved through collaboration by creating regimes, which constrain states and will guide decision-making. Dilemma of common aversions can be resolved through policy coordination, which does not require a regime to be formalized or institutionalized.

Arthur Stein is interested in the likelihood of cooperation in anarchy and the role of international institutions or regimes in facilitating cooperation. Stein believes that regimes are created in the international arena to curb individualistic behavior. Stein claims "[r]egimes arise because actors forgo independent decision making in order to deal with the dilemmas of common interests and common aversions."<sup>43</sup> The difference is that in dilemmas of common interests, actors share a common interest in ensuring a particular outcome, where in dilemmas of common aversion situations, actors have a common interest in avoiding a particular outcome. Each dilemma produces very different types of regimes. Dilemmas of common interest regimes are based on collaboration, where dilemmas of common aversion regimes require coordination. Regimes of collaboration that are "intended to deal with dilemma of common interests must specify strict patterns of behavior and ensure that no one cheats."<sup>44</sup> Collaboration requires a degree of formalization with a clear distinction between what is considered cooperation and cheating. These regimes also require that each actor must be assured of their own ability to immediately spot others cheating. By contrast, regimes established for dilemmas of common aversion need only facilitate coordination and ensure particular outcomes are avoided.<sup>45</sup> Here a regime created to deal with common aversion issues

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<sup>42</sup> Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables," 195.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Stein, "Coordination and Cooperation: Regimes in an Anarchic World," in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. David Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 41.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 42.

supports the explanatory framework of the SCO as a “concert”—created and maintained to ensure the status quo of the existing political order in Central Asia by averting possibilities of regime change. For the purpose of this thesis, the empirical chapters will only examine the cooperative efforts of Russia and China in considering if the SCO is an international regime created and sustained for solving long-term common interest issues.

Political power is the second major causal variable for explaining regime development. Political power as a variable has two different orientations. The cosmopolitan approach promotes maximizing joint gains for the common good (e.g. collective goods such as defense, the maintenance of order, and general welfare). However, this altruistic approach is limited because even if states see a collective good, they will only cooperate if it is in their interests. The alternative power orientation is in the service of particular interest where “[p]ower is used to enhance the values of specific actors within the system.”<sup>46</sup> In these cases, the incentives to create regimes may be to protect the distribution of power or they might be associated with powerful states’ attempts to use compulsory strategies to limit the autonomous choices of weak states. In the latter case, “dominant actors may secure de facto compliance by manipulating opportunities sets so that weaker actors are compelled to behave in a desired way.”<sup>47</sup>

If the SCO reflects neoliberal institutional regime theory, then there should be evidence that the SCO was created and maintained to promote cooperation and reduce dilemmas of common interest. The key area to analyze rests in how Russia and China view the SCO. Specifically, was it created and maintained to improve collaborative efforts by reducing uncertainty, monitoring behavior, and increasing information sharing in long-term common issue areas? One should look for examples of Russia and China promoting the collective good regionally over using their positions of strength to advance their own interests at the expense of the smaller Central Asian republics. In this vein, one must consider how Russia and China view the importance of the SCO’s multilateral framework over bilateral state-to-state relations among SCO member states.

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<sup>46</sup> Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” 197.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 199.

## **E. DOES THE SCO REFLECT IDENTITY DRIVEN INTERESTS?**

Both neorealism and neoliberalism offer possible explanations for what the SCO is (e.g. alliance, concert, or regime) and what its agenda might entail. These theoretical approaches offer a snapshot of the SCO in time, but do not reflect the underpinning interests behind Russian and Chinese motivations. While these theories are strong in their approaches to security and economic issues, they make assumptions of how each member state might view the SCO, while failing to address the sources of these interests. It is problematic to assume what the interests are and additional analysis is required to develop a solid foundation of how these interests were formed. An alternative theory, social constructivism, offers a compelling case by examining the sources of state interests.

Social constructivism provides insights into how a state's identity might shape its interests, especially in relation to external and internal events which seem to induce responses from the SCO in its joint communiqués. When examining the balance between security and economic issues, perceptions of interests get at the larger question of how states will behave—specifically, how Russia and China are pursuing their interests in the SCO. This section looks at a constructivist approach for understanding state interests and state behavior by investigating Russian and Chinese motives for creating and sustaining the SCO.

Social constructivism shares an interest in how norms, culture, and debates about identity, influence and shape the international system. Using this approach provides an avenue “to specify the interests of actors, the sources of these interests, and how those interests change.”<sup>48</sup> Much constructivist inquiry looks for examples of states evolving from individualist identities of “every state for itself,” to a collectivist identity, in which countries identify their security in a greater collective whole. In this view:

states form their security identity through a process of reiterated interaction with other states ... a long process of friendly interaction may lead states to not only identify each other as allies and friends, but to view

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<sup>48</sup> Anne L. Clunan, “Constructing Concepts of Identity,” in *Beyond Boundaries? Disciplines, Paradigms, and Theoretical Integration in International Studies*, eds. Rudra Siland and Eileen M. Doherty (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 90.

their security interests as intertwined and consequently to identify with each other as belonging to the same community.<sup>49</sup>

While this explanation is less parsimonious than those previously addressed, it does add value in the conceptualization of identity, comprising of both international and domestic factors. Stated briefly, a state's identity and interests form based on how significant events affect its perceptions of self and are a prescription for its policy orientations. Constructivist explanations may in fact provide a complete picture of how Russian and Chinese identities and interests have influenced the creation and continuing evolution of the SCO, reflect shifts in interests and how cooperation in security and economic spheres has grown to accommodate these interests.

The SCO might reflect an emerging collective consciousness of certain common interests and values, by which bind Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics by a commonly accepted set of rules in their relations with one another. The SCO might reflect a codification of these interests with the production of a common working institution. In this case, international and domestic politics can play a large role in defining national goals and interests. In examining this theoretical approach, the analysis will look for evidence of Russian and Chinese identities evolving in the post-Cold War environment. An important factor is an evaluation of how both internal and domestic events play a role in developing new identities. Do the Russians and Chinese recognize that new tasks and challenges are at hand, and thus, the need for creating a new bureaucracy for carrying out these tasks?

#### **F. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The next three chapters will examine the empirical evidence supporting the notions that the SCO either is an alliance, a concert, an international regime or identity driven. If balance of threat applies to the SCO, then the evidence will show that the SCO is an ad hoc, temporary alliance built to defend against an external threat. If omnibalancing explains the SCO, then it reflects an ad hoc, temporary concert generated for countering both external and internal threats, as well as preserving the status quo in Central Asia. If interdependence applies, then the SCO can be described as an international regime formed to address common interest issues through cooperation and

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<sup>49</sup> Clunan, "Constructing Concepts of Identity," 94-95

collaboration in the long-term. There will be evidence of states wanting a regime because they are interested in reducing transaction costs and uncertainty, as well as increasing information flows. However, if social constructivism is the most relevant approach, then the previous assumptions are inadequate and one must inquire into how changes in identity are reflected in interest formation to understand what are Russia's and China's motivations.

These distinctions are necessary for conducting a comprehensive analysis which is attentive to short- versus long-term gains, perceptions of threat, and whether power, security, and economics are a vehicle or a desired result. In this endeavor, the Russian and Chinese chapters are laid out as follows. The first section of each chapter will begin with an examination of how interests may have been influenced or shaped by key regional and international events since the end of the Cold War, to determine if questions of identity shaped interest toward Central Asia and how each country views the SCO. The second section will consider a country's view of its strategic interests and political motives in Central Asia to determine if the views of the SCO and its members support the argument that the SCO is a defensive alliance against the U.S. The third section will look for evidence of interdependence—especially in economic issues—and international regime formation/maintenance whereby each country has developed a set of common interests, and seeks to achieve long-term gains through cooperation in Central Asia. The fourth section will investigate evidence of coordination activities and common perceptions of threat to the status quo to address whether or not Russia and China view the SCO as a modern day concert of Central Asia. However, before advancing into the empirical chapters, the next chapter will present a brief history and cursory analysis of the Shanghai-Five and SCO from 1996 to 2005.

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### **III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The Shanghai-Five and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can be seen as a logical follow up to the 1990 agreement between the former Soviet Union and China. Their goal was to ensure good neighborly ties, as well as reducing the number of armed forces in the border regions of Central Asia. The independence of the Central Asian republics in 1991 brought new sovereign nations into the regional discussions. The original 1996 Shanghai Agreement developed from two delegations; one group led by Russia representing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), while the other group was led by China.<sup>50</sup>

##### **1. The Shanghai-Five / Forum**

A 1996 meeting in Shanghai and a 1997 meeting in Moscow laid the foundation of the modern SCO. Originally, the Shanghai Forum was formed to address a number of regional issues in Central Asia.<sup>51</sup> First, the Shanghai Forum's declared purpose was a commitment to fostering friendly relations and cooperation between its member states. Second, they wanted to promote mutual military trust between their countries. Finally, they wanted to reduce the number of armaments along the borders of their countries making it a 1000-km demilitarized zone.

The 1998 meeting of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan in Almaty, Kazakhstan marked a dramatic departure from previous conferences where things were said, but never done. The vision for the meeting was to lay the foundation of turning “the border between the five countries into a frontier of genuinely equitable and mutually advantageous cooperation.”<sup>52</sup> Prior to the meeting, one observer noted that the

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<sup>50</sup> The original parties to the Shanghai-Five were China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Only after the 2001 meeting was Uzbekistan added to the grouping, resulting in the modern day SCO.

<sup>51</sup> The Shanghai Forum may also be referred to as the Shanghai-Five prior to 2001, when it became the SCO, with the addition of Uzbekistan to the regional grouping.

<sup>52</sup> Vladimir Akimov, “Five Nation Almaty Meeting ion July to Promote Friendship,” *Moscow ITAR-TASS* in English, 24 June 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980624000387.

five countries would come out of the meeting as independent partners in a negotiated alliance.<sup>53</sup> The meeting of the Group of Five was attended by the president of each country, with the exception of Russia, which was represented by Foreign Minister Primakov instead of President Yeltsin. The primary purpose of the meeting was to solidify the joint statements of the 1996 and 1997 meetings, including resolving Cold War border security issues and to make the organization “weightier and more solid.”<sup>54</sup> During the Cold War, Central Asia held a great concentration of opposing Soviet and Chinese forces. “However, in the new conditions the countries of the region have resolved to turn what was once the major zone of tension into a zone of security.”<sup>55</sup>

The five countries also took a “principled position on the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan.”<sup>56</sup> This unanimity demonstrated the SCO’s concern over issues, which could lead to regional instability and “reflects their confidence and determination in nuclear non-proliferation and prevention of nuclear tests.”<sup>57</sup> In addition, the Chinese took the opportunity at this gathering to meet separately with Kazakhstan to resolve border dispute issues between their countries.

The 1999 Shanghai-Five meeting in Bishkek was significant in that the members began to talk about reviving the “silk road” economy. The new “silk road” involved the economic integration of Russia, China and the Central Asian republics through trade and investment, especially in the oil and gas sectors. China was already busy mapping out its plans for the SCO prior to September 11, 2001. Chinese President Jiang Zemin called on the member nations to continue their cooperation “to guarantee regional security, crack

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<sup>53</sup> Akimov, “Five Nation Almaty Meeting ion July to Promote Friendship,” FBIS Document ID: FTS19980624000387.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Igor Rotar, “Group of Five Without Yeltsin: Statement on Development of Mutual Trust To Be Signed in Almaty Today,” *Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 3 July 1998. FBIS Document ID: FTS19980703000821.

<sup>56</sup> “Kazakh Envoy Comments on Almaty Summit,” *Beijing Review* 30, pp. 8-9, 27 July 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980807002137.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

down on the forces of religious extremism and ethnic separatism, as well as combating international terrorist activities.”<sup>58</sup> Additionally, the conference joint communiqué urged members to develop further cooperation between ministries of defense and interior.<sup>59</sup>

The 2000 meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan marked the first Shanghai Forum reaction to U.S. foreign policy. The NATO war in Yugoslavia was conducted without UN Security Council approval. China and Russia used the joint communiqué to state the importance of maintaining UN authority, particularly that of the Security Council. It also called “for a more effective role for the UN in conflict resolution … and condemned the use of human rights for undermining the national sovereignty of states.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the joint communiqué called for the establishment of a counter-terrorism center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan “to jointly combat national separatism, international terrorism, and religious extremism,” as well as preventing trans-border activities.<sup>61</sup> The anti-terrorism center was planned to “serve as the legal basis to start substantial cooperation in security issues and offer a more effective means for the fledgling organization to combat terrorism together.”<sup>62</sup> Additionally, Uzbekistan attended this conference as an observer and applied for full SCO membership.

## **2. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Creation**

The sixth meeting of the Shanghai-Five in 2001 was preceded by several key meetings attended by the members’ general staffs and foreign ministers. The grouping of five members was gaining its legs as a regional forum and organization. When Uzbekistan became a full member, the group became known as the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization.” This face-lift was ushered in by a series of policy decisions and conventions such as a communiqué on arms control reaffirming the SCO’s support for the 1972 ABM treaty and opposition to the U.S. National Missile Defense (NMD)

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<sup>58</sup> Dr. Maqbool Ahmad Bhatty: “Role of the Shanghai-5,” *Karachi Dawn* (Internet version-WWW) in English, 16 June 2000, FBIS Document ID: SAP20000716000029.

<sup>59</sup> In early February 1999, Tashkent was rocked by a series of explosions attributed to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) with the backing of the Taliban Government in Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda. Later in July and August of the same year several hundred Islamic extremists invaded Kyrgyzstan in an effort to create an Islamic state in southern Kyrgyzstan as a spring board for a jihad in Uzbekistan.

<sup>60</sup> Bhatty: “Role of the Shanghai-5.” FBIS Document ID: SAP20000716000029.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> “Shanghai Cooperation Organization Approves Center of Anti-terror,” 8 June 2002. Available from *China.org* <<http://www.china.org.cn/english/FR/34120.htm>> (accessed 23 May 2005).

program, as well as declaring Central Asia a nuclear free zone.<sup>63</sup> The attendees also came out in support of the UN charter and pledged noninterference in each other's internal affairs.<sup>64</sup> The SCO also indicated that they wanted to expand regional cooperation and initiated a dialogue with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional forum. The heads of state also agreed to speed up institutionalization of cooperation mechanisms in areas of border security, confidence building, anti-terrorist, separatist and extremist activities, economic cooperation, and social/cultural exchanges. Moreover, they also wanted to establish a apparatus for dispute resolution among SCO partners.<sup>65</sup> The main output of this conference was the "The Shanghai Convention on Fighting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism." The Convention's twenty-one articles continued to focus the SCO on regional security issues, while downplaying any notion of the SCO as a military alliance.<sup>66</sup> According to Georgiy Bovt, at the SCO's initial formation, its members considered "the Afghan regime their main adversary and planter of terrorism and narcotics."<sup>67</sup>

The first three years of the SCO's agenda had been primarily driven by security concerns, including the reduction of state tensions over border disputes and by providing for stability in the highly ethnically fragmented Central Asian region. Economic

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<sup>63</sup> For coverage see: "AFP: China, Russia, Central Asia Endorse ABM Treaty," *Hong Kong AFP* in English, 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CPP20010615000042; and Dimitry Zaks "AFP: PRC Vice FM Says SCO Leaders United in Opposition to US Missile Shield," *Hong Kong AFP* in English, 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CPP20010615000077

<sup>64</sup> For specific details, see: "Declaration of the formation of the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization' - issued in Shanghai on 15 June 2001," Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service in Chinese, 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CPP20010615000054; "Xinhua Carries Declaration of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Beijing Xinhua in English, 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CPP20010615000110; and Qign Tong, Jin Xuegeng, and Lubin, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit Opens in Shanghai; Jiang Zemin Speaks," Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service, 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CPP20010615000097.

<sup>65</sup> For text of speech by Russian President Vladimir Putin at Shanghai summit 15 June 2001, see: "Birth of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Could Introduce Positive Change into Continent's Political Landscape," *Moscow Strana.ru National Information Service WWW-Text* in Russian 15 June 01, FBIS Document ID: CEP20010615000114.

<sup>66</sup> "Six Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Decide To Battle Three Evil Forces," *Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao (Internet Version-WWW)* in Chinese, 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CPP20010615000039. However, at the final press conference one Russia media source noted that PRC President Jiang Zemin stressed that the formation of ShOS [international political lexicon for the SCO] will contribute to the formation of a multipolar world." Cited in Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, "Geopolitics rubric: Shanghai -- Security through Cooperation," *Moscow Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in Russian 15 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CEP20010618000159.

<sup>67</sup> Georgiy Bovt, "Hexagon against Triangle" -- taken from HTML version of source, provided by ISP, *Moscow Izvestiya* in Russian, 16 June 2001, FBIS Document ID: CEP20010618000244.

coordination had not developed beyond existing bilateral ties. Economic cooperation took a backseat to security concerns and occupied “a strictly marginal position in the work of the youthful forum.”<sup>68</sup>

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the SCO began to evolve more rapidly. The U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom brought U.S. forces to Central Asia. While the Chinese and Russians recognized America’s right to respond to the sources responsible for the terrorist attacks, the establishment of U.S. airbases in Uzbekistan, a newly added member of the SCO, and Kyrgyzstan raised concerns within some military circles in Russia. The SCO hastily pushed forward the establishment of a planned anti-terrorism center. In June 2002, the SCO signed the “Agreement between the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Regional Anti-terrorist structure.” This agreement was significant as it called for a clear-cut legal framework “for the establishment at the regional level of practical interaction in the struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism.”<sup>69</sup> In addition, the SCO regional anti-terror center was renamed the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS).

At the May 2003 meeting in Moscow, the leaders reached a consensus on the architecture of the future institutional organization of the SCO. The most significant actions taken by the SCO heads of state was establishing an office of the SCO secretariat, which would be situated in Beijing, as well as the decision to launch a regional anti-terrorism center by January 1, 2004.<sup>70</sup> The Moscow SCO summit decided to move the

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<sup>68</sup> Bovt, “Hexagon against Triangle,” FBIS Document ID: CEP20010618000244.

<sup>69</sup> Declaration by the Heads of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 7 June 2002, from the Daily News Bulletin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department.

<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the People's Republic of China, “Third SCO Submit Meeting Held in Moscow,” 29 May 2003. Available from *The School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies* <[http://russia.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/20030529\\_sco\\_c\\_1.html](http://russia.shaps.hawaii.edu/fp/russia/20030529_sco_c_1.html)> (accessed 23 May 2005.)

Executive Committee of the SCO regional anti-terror center from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to Tashkent, Uzbekistan.<sup>71</sup> The SCO also conducted its first joint exercise during August 7–12, 2003.<sup>72</sup>

Shortly after the meeting in Moscow, the SCO held a follow up economic cooperation and integration ministerial meeting in Beijing. The Prime Ministers settled on a budget for the organization's secretariat and the Tashkent anti-terrorism center. The officials codified six additional documents toward the institutionalization of the SCO. The documents solidified multilateral economic and trade cooperation, the 2004 SCO budget, and the “rules and regulations on salary and allowances for staff members of the permanent [SCO] body.”<sup>73</sup> In addition, other documents covered the “anti-terrorism institution and personnel arrangement, technical initiation of the SCO permanent body, and a joint communiqué of the consultation.”<sup>74</sup> An outside observer noted, “[W]ith the institutional arrangements and administrative functions taking shape, the group should be able to deal with events and threats it had previously been criticized as incapable of handling.”<sup>75</sup>

With its institutional mechanisms in place, the SCO was ready to coordinate its activities with the Asian-Pacific region. The June 2004 meeting in Tashkent further solidified the SCO's framework, including approving Mongolia as a SCO observer. In addition to discussing the security and stability in the region, including the remnants of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other Islamic extremist groups, Russia put forth an initiative to create a SCO-Afghanistan contact group to revive the Afghan economy. The SCO members also signed an agreement outlining cooperation in the fight against illicit drug trading. Russian President Putin “emphasized the importance of the SCO countries’

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<sup>71</sup> Yu Bin, “China-Russia Relations: Presidential Politicking and Proactive Posturing,” *Comparative Connections: A Quarterly EJournal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* 6, no.1: 117 (April 2004), [e-journal] <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0401Q.pdf>> (accessed 23 May 2005).

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly Uzbekistan chose not to participate in this exercise. For detailed coverage, see: “Special Press Summary: SCO Exercises in Central Asia,” 7–12 August 2003. Available from *Virtual Information Center Online* <<http://www.vic-info.org>> (accessed 23 May 2005).

<sup>73</sup> “A Special Press Summary: Shanghai Cooperation Organization Foreign Minister’s meeting,” 18 June 2004. Available from *Virtual Information Center Online* <<http://www.vic-info.org>> (accessed 25 May 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. (e.g. little and slow reaction to the September 11th attacks, for instance)

participation in the implementation of the initiative to create external anti-drug security belts around Afghanistan.”<sup>76</sup> The heads of state also agreed to set up a SCO regional development fund, as well as a plan to hold an economic forum.<sup>77</sup>

The July 2005 SCO summit meeting, held in Astana, Kazakhstan had planned to focus on the economy, but was overcome by domestic events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated the SCO had plans to establish a comprehensive regional development fund and business council at the next summit meeting.<sup>78</sup> Lavrov indicated that the 2005 meeting may go a long way toward solving regional problems: “Last year’s security and stability initiatives are being implemented, and contacts are being established with other organizations.”<sup>79</sup> He further remarked that the “documents on cooperation with ASEAN and the CIS are being drafted, and the SCO has received an official observer status at the UN General Assembly. This creates new possibilities for the solution of regional problems.”<sup>80</sup>

However, the meeting was preceded by two events that gave rise to new fears among the SCO member states. First, in March 2005, “a suddenly restive Kyrgyz street brought down long-ruling President Askar Akayev, prompting parallels with earlier changes in Georgia and Ukraine.”<sup>81</sup> Later in May 2005, Uzbek police and military units used deadly “force to put down an uprising in Andijon, outraging public opinion in the West even as Russia and China chimed in with warm words of support for Uzbek President Islam Karimov.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Russian President Calls for SCO Initiative To Revive Afghan Economy,” *Moscow Radio Rossii* in Russian, 17 June 2004, FBIS Document ID: CEP20040617000071.

<sup>77</sup> “Uzbekistan: Shanghai Group To Set Up Regional Development Fund,” *Tashkent Uzbek Television Second Channel* in Uzbek, 17 June 2004, FBIS Document ID: CEP20040617000081.

<sup>78</sup> Agarkov, “Pakistan, Iran Apply for Observer Status in SCO,” FBIS Document ID: CEP20050225000340.

<sup>79</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, cited in Agarkov, “Pakistan, Iran Apply for Observer Status in SCO,” FBIS Document ID: CEP20050225000340.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Kimmage, “Central Asia: Is Regional Turbulence Return of the Great Game?” 19 July 2005. Available from *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 26 July 2005).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

The 2005 summit produced one highly publicized communiqué “rife with great-power ramifications.”<sup>83</sup> This SCO communiqué virtually called for the U.S. to establish a timetable for the removal of its forces from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>84</sup> The SCO based its justification on the U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalition’s completion of the active military phase of operations in Afghanistan.

## B. TIMELINE ANALYSIS OF THE SCO

The SCO has led to an impressive level of cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia. The SCO offers Russia and China a mutually beneficial partnership. Thus far, the SCO has reduced military forces along the Russian and Chinese borders, established a coordinative security arrangement for managing traditional and non-traditional security crises, and established a forum for economic development in the Central Asian region. In short, the SCO provides a forum for Russia and China to manage their security, stability, and economic development interests in Central Asia. Nevertheless, what does this unprecedented level of cooperation tell U.S. policy makers about the SCO?

This section provides a general timeline analysis of the Shanghai-Five and the SCO to see if the theories discussed in the previous chapter can help explain whether it is an alliance, a “concert”, an international regime or if there has been a change in identities which shaped the member states’ interest in the SCO. While helpful, these initial conclusions are insufficient to explain what is driving Russian and Chinese interests in the SCO or how it may affect U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia. The next two chapters further explore Russia’s and China’s interests in Central Asia to provide a more thorough framework for drawing conclusions that are more definitive on the implications of the SCO. These results are more explicitly examined in Chapter VI after taking into account Russian and Chinese strategic incentives, economic agendas, and security interests in Central Asia.

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<sup>83</sup> Daniel Kimmage, “Central Asia; SCO – Shoring Up the Post-Soviet Status Quo,” 8 July 2005. Available from *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 26 July 2005).

<sup>84</sup> The NATO coalition facilities in Central Asia included U.S. air bases in Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan and Manas, Kyrgyzstan as well as NATO facilities in Termez, Uzbekistan, and Kolub, Tajikistan.

## **1. Shanghai-Five Analysis (1996-2000)**

The original outcome of the 1996 and 1997 SCO meetings was an agreement for fostering good neighborly ties and reducing tensions by establishing a framework for demilitarizing the member states' borders. These issues remain valid today as an example of long-term cooperation in a common interest item, but at this early stage it would be too soon to characterize the Shanghai Forum as an international regime. The actions of the members cannot support the other potential arguments of the SCO being an alliance or a concert.

In 1998 the SCO sought to formulize a demilitarized zone in the shared border areas. Kuanysh Sultanov, ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the People's Republic of China clearly identified the reasons behind the Almaty summit:

A summit of the heads of bordering states absolutely does not mean uniting in some sort of bloc, nor is it designed as a counterbalance against anybody. They come together out of common interest in the fields of peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation.<sup>85</sup>

The Shanghai Forum members also took a principled position on regional nuclear non-proliferation to ensure that Central Asia remained a nuclear-free zone. This can be categorized as another long-term common interest issue. During this meeting, China began working to establish bilateral relations with the newly independent republics. This was especially true with Kazakhstan, which one might explain as a self-interest item for economic access to energy resources.

Despite the successes of the conference, Moscow may have started to lose influence over Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan early in the Shanghai Forum meetings. It was unclear as to why President Boris Yeltsin did not attend the conference. Several theories are that he did not attend due to a dispute with Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev over the allocation of Caspian Sea resources or more logically due to internal Russian political tensions. Regardless, Beijing's reaction was not positive.<sup>86</sup> This poses several interesting questions: What affect, if any, did Yeltsin's absence play in

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<sup>85</sup> "Kazakh Envoy Comments on Almaty Summit," FBIS Document ID: FTS19980807002137.

<sup>86</sup> Igor Rotar, "Group of Five Without Yeltsin: Statement on Development of Mutual Trust To Be Signed in Almaty Today," *Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 3 July 1998. FBIS Document ID: FTS19980703000821

the initial stages of the SCO's development? Did Yeltsin's administration view the Shanghai Forum as just another bi- or multi-lateral agreement that complimented other arrangements with its former Soviet Union states? Or did the lack of Russian leadership from the outset or the inept Yeltsin regime allow China to begin to dominate the future SCO agenda from the start?

The 1999 meeting focused its efforts on long-term economic cooperation with talk of the revival of the “silk” road. However, the Chinese took the lead on proposing cooperation against regional threats to the member states. Later, during the summer (July-August) of 1999, several hundred Islamic extremists invaded southern Kyrgyzstan from Afghanistan, in an attempt to establish bases of operations for launching attacks into Uzbekistan. These forces were eventually driven out by October of that same year, only to reappear in August 2000. The impact of an invasion by forces tied to the Taliban government in Afghanistan, forced all member states to consider a new threat to the regional status quo. The reactions of the SCO members' seem to support the omnibalancing approach against internal enemies of the state and balance of threat against external foes.

The first reactions to U.S. foreign policy occurred in 2000. Russia and China could not stop NATO's air war over Serbia and Kosovo and were irate at the seemingly revisionist nature of U.S. foreign policy. NATO's eastward expansion was also a great concern and was perceived as an American policy to encircle China and an attempt to further isolate Russia from its former Soviet republics. Clearly, both the Russians and Chinese saw the U.S. as a threat and required them to come together to balance against the U.S. However, their reactions to U.S. and NATO foreign policy did not necessarily paint the SCO as a defensive alliance against the U.S., because the priority threat lay elsewhere, especially for the post-communist transitioning Central Asian states. The SCO's move toward a cooperative security arrangement to counter terrorism, separatism and extremism indicates more of an omnibalancing approach by the Central Asian states in a concert to maintain the status quo. However, this security arrangement also supports an international regime explanation. The fight against the “Three Evils” required the

members to pool their security efforts and to codify the administrative mechanisms necessary for resolving dilemmas of common interest, which can be explained by international regime theory.

## **2. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Analysis (2001-2005)**

In 2001, the SCO once again reacted negatively to U.S. foreign policy decisions to withdraw from the 1972 ABM treaty and the development of a national missile defense program. This still does not support a military alliance assumption because the SCO members still viewed the primary threat as emanating from the Afghan Taliban-led government's support for Islamic radicals operating in Central Asia, as well as narcotics trafficking. The evidence shows that maintaining the status quo was at the top of the agenda. The addition of Uzbekistan to the SCO's membership ranks follows this line of reasoning. The SCO's actions in 2001 continued to demonstrate an interest in long-term cooperation by establishing a formalized bureaucracy to deal with dilemmas of common interest, both in the security and economic spheres. This supports international regime theory. However, security still dominated the agenda over economic coordination. This can be attributed to existing Russian investments in the Central Asia's energy resource firms and control of the distribution infrastructure. These factors mixed with Moscow's attempts to use the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Community allowed it to maintain a soft hegemony and economic influence within the region at both bilateral and multilateral levels.<sup>87</sup>

By the 2002 meeting, U.S.-led forces had removed the Taliban government in Afghanistan, thereby lessening the members identified source of threat from terrorism, separatism and extremism. Nevertheless, the SCO pressed ahead with formalizing a legal framework for combating these sources of threat internal to the member states. This clearly supports international regime theory but can also be seen as cooperation for maintaining the regional status quo. This does not represent a short-term, ad hoc alliance dedicated to combating internal and external threats represented by omnibalancing.

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<sup>87</sup> Bovt, "Hexagon against Triangle," FBIS Document ID: CEP20010618000244.

The 2003 decision to create a SCO Secretariat further supports the international regime argument. While both Russia and China have a huge stake in the future success of the SCO, the Chinese were clearly the big diplomatic winner. The Chinese succeeded where the Russians had failed. Chinese participation within the SCO offered the Central Asian states an alternative choice to other Russian attempts at multilateralism through the CIS. Finalizing the “SCO Charter validates Beijing’s ‘new security concept’ of promoting multilateral approaches to regional security, as opposed to U.S.-led bilateral alliances or other security relationships.”<sup>88</sup> Russia has also supported multilateral approaches including Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)-NATO parity in Central Asia, but has been more effective in promoting bilateral relations with its former republics. This is especially true in military-to-military contacts. Russia’s attempts to use its various post-communist multilateral frameworks have met resistance from the Central Asia states who have either participated minimally or opted out, such as Uzbekistan in the CSTO. By taking this approach, the Central Asian states have loosened their ties with Moscow and have found themselves in a better situation to bargain state-to-state, even if at a disadvantage in traditional power categories.

The 2004 SCO heads of state meeting in Kyrgyzstan was expected to launch the foundation of future economic cooperation.<sup>89</sup> The agenda showed more signs of regime maintenance (e.g. multilateral economic and trade cooperation agreements, SCO budget, and rules and regulations for the secretariat). Additionally, efforts to reach out to other regional countries and multilateral organizations are signs of increasing cooperation and promoting shared interests (e.g. countering narcotics trade and establishing a regional development fund). The future of the SCO was pointing toward a mechanism to set up an economic alliance and free trade zone benefiting all its members. China’s position of the SCO has remained consistent that “[t]he SCO will never grow into a military bloc nor resume military confrontation as in the Cold War.”<sup>90</sup> These comments illustrate China’s desire to reduce direct military confrontation with the U.S. and support the argument that

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<sup>88</sup> Bates Gill, ‘Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit,’ 28 May 2003. Available from *CSIS Online* <[http://www.csis.org/press/pr03\\_36.htm](http://www.csis.org/press/pr03_36.htm)> (accessed 29 August 2004).

<sup>89</sup> “China, Russia, Other SCO Nations Aim for Economic Integration: Official,” *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 18 August 2004, FBIS Document ID: CPP20040818000099.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

China's economic security is the driving force behind its foreign policy in Central Asia and its interests in the SCO. However, the events of 2005 have once again forced those studying the SCO and its members to reconsider if Chinese economic security or Russian prestige is on the line, and will the pursuit of these interests turn the SCO into a defensive alliance and a lever against U.S. foreign policy interests in Central Asia?

The 2005 ouster of Kyrgyzstan President Akayev and the international reaction to the Andijon uprising may have shifted the members of the SCO's perception of threat. These two events, on the heels of other "colored" revolutions, began to shape how the SCO leaders identified threats to the regional status quo. Namely, outside actors were involved in undermining regime stability. Non-state actors were not the source of threat; instead, the threat emanated from other states interfering in the domestic affairs of sovereign countries. This antirevolutionary fervor can be seen as a shared reaction to regime change. Some SCO member states associate this new source of instability as a step-by-step attempt by U.S. foreign policy to advance democracy in the region; some seeing the U.S. as a revisionist power in Central Asia that was intent on destabilizing the fragile status quo.

Moscow and Beijing had mixed initial reactions to the events in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>91</sup> In the aftermath of the regime change, the new Kyrgyzstan government agreed to continue with all of its SCO commitments and pledged to continue to work within the cooperative SCO framework. Fears abated as both Russia and China accepted the new Kyrgyz leadership. However, these events might have demonstrated the first evidence of a state's willingness to pursue short-term gains, overriding its commitment toward long-term cooperation. In the end, all sought the longer-term solution, but one might question how a similar scenario in Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan would play out in terms of Russia or China pursuing their own self-interests. The U.S. was not considered

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<sup>91</sup> "China Sought Military Intervention at the Time of Kyrgyzstan 'Revolution,'" *Tokyo Foresight* in Japanese, 16 April 2005, p 30, FBIS Document ID: JPP20050422000067; "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Secretary General Zhang Deguang Visits Kyrgyz Republic," *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* in Chinese, 7 April 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050407000158; and "Kyrgyzstan Supports SCO's Goal of Regional Peace, Prosperity," *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 7 April 2005, FBID Document ID: CPP20050407000249.

or rhetorically mentioned as the primary threat after the events in Kyrgyzstan. However, after the events in Andijon, Uzbekistan this conspiratorial notion of the U.S. being the main threat to regional stability became a new source of agitation and speculation.<sup>92</sup>

The SCO's 2005 communiqué called for establishing a time table for the exit of anti-terrorism coalition forces from Central Asia. This is the strongest evidence to date which might support the argument that the SCO is becoming a defensive alliance against the U.S. The reason for this shift in rhetoric varied. Some speculated that the SCO permanent members recognized, even in their own assessment, that the impact of their organization as a regional antiterrorist structure had marginal results to date, and that its influence over the security dynamics in Central Asia had been minimal due to the U.S. military presence.<sup>93</sup>

Others have speculated that Uzbek President Karimov was behind the general push for the anti-U.S. declaration—specifically, as a singular response to U.S. criticism of the regime's refusal to permit an international investigation into events in Andijon.<sup>94</sup> Moscow has backed Tashkent during its latest downturn in relations with the U.S., but has also pursued its own interests by “incorporating in the declaration the paragraph about the timeframe for the US bases’ stay in Central Asia. This can be seen as responding to Washington for the tough stance espoused by US-backed Georgia on the

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<sup>92</sup> For examples of why the SCO should not be considered a defense alliance against the U.S. after the regime change in Kyrgyzstan, see: Song Zongli and Sha Dati, “Li Zhaoxing Expounds on China's Stance at Shanghai Cooperation Organization Foreign Ministers Meeting,” *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* in Chinese, 4 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050604000121; Nikolay Sergeyev interview with Kazakhstan's Security Council Secretary Bolat Utemuratov, “Responding to the challenges of the century,” *Astana Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (Internet Version-WWW) in Russian, 2 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050608033046; “Russian FM Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Not ‘Anti-Orange Bloc,’” *Almaty Interfax-Kazakhstan* in Russian, 4 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050604029020; and “Lavrov Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Not Planning Military Structure,” *Moscow RIA-Novosti* in Russian, 6 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050606027013.

<sup>93</sup> Lyudmila Romanova, “Americans Must Not Stay in Central Asia. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Asks Them To Leave the Region,” *Moscow Gazeta* in Russian, 6 July 2005, p 3, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706023001.

<sup>94</sup> Romanova, “Americans Must Not Stay in Central Asia. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Asks Them To Leave the Region,” FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706023001. Also see “Kyrgyzstani Figures Say SCO Position on US Bases Linked to Uzbekistani Leader,” *Moscow Agentstvo Vojennyykh Novostey* WWW-Text in English, 6 July 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706036018; Daniel Kimmage, “Uzbekistan: Karimov Battens down the Hatches,” 1 August 2005. Available from *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 2 August 2005); and Gulnoza Saidazimova, “Central Asia: What Does Closure of U.S. Military Base in Uzbekistan Mean?” 1 August 2005. Available from *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 2 August 2005).

withdrawal of Russian bases from its territory.”<sup>95</sup> The Russians now seem to have distanced themselves from calling on the U.S. to establish a timetable for removing its troops from the Central Asian airbases.

Russian President Putin commented that there was “nothing out of the ordinary” in the SCO seeking a requested timetable. Further, he highlighted that the SCO, in pursuit of its anti-terrorism agenda, did not need to establish SCO military bases and that in practical terms Russia considered military issues to be a part of the CIS CSTO purview.<sup>96</sup> Sergey Prokhorov, a Putin presidential aide, when asked if the subject of withdrawing U.S. forces had come up during the G-8 Summit in Scotland replied: “No. The question is of strictly applied nature.”<sup>97</sup> Others suggest that this SCO proclamation is empty because, besides the rhetorical value, the U.S. seems to be the only country able to effectively maintain any semblance of stability in the region. The basic problem for the Central Asian states is that they “are incapable of resolving their own geopolitical fate without the patronage--including military--of stronger powers.”<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, Russia lacks the capability and resources necessary for assuming such a role, and is unwilling to let China replace the US., because China has its own issues to commit its resources toward.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Romanova, “Americans Must Not Stay in Central Asia. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Asks Them To Leave the Region.” FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706023001

<sup>96</sup> “Russian Leader Says SCO's Request on Afghanistan Coalition Troops Normal,” *Moscow ITAR-TASS* in English, 8 July 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050708027183. According to Putin, the establishing the CSTO was “not for any kind of operations on the territories of member-states but rebuffing of external aggressors.” Interestingly Uzbekistan is not part of the CSTO. A point further illustrated by Russian Deputy Defense Minister Sergei Razov: “Our priorities are economy and security.” See “Russian Defense Official Says Military Cooperation Not Among SCO's Priorities,” *Moscow Agentstvo Vojennyykh Novostey* WWW-Text in English, 8 July 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050708013003.

<sup>97</sup> Natalya Melikova, “Americans Are Being Hurried Out of Asia; Call for Speedy Winding Down of NATO Bases Is Main Result of Astana Antiterrorist Summit,” *Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 5 July 2005, p 2, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706025001. Interestingly both Russian President Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao attended the G-8 Submit but publicly failed to address the issue U.S. basing issue.

<sup>98</sup> “Tactic of Cutting off Nose to Spite Face,” *Moscow Gazeta.ru* WWW-Text in Russian, 6 July 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706006001.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Other regional reactions were also mixed. Tajik opposition leader Muhiddin “Kabiri said that the leaders of the SCO states considered the USA’s presence as one of the factors for ‘colour revolutions’ on post-Soviet territory.”<sup>100</sup> The Kyrgyz foreign minister recognized the past benefits of a U.S. presence in the region. However, she pointed out that the duration of the anti-terrorist coalition’s military bases in the SCO countries in Central Asia would be “directly connected with changes in the situation in Afghanistan.”<sup>101</sup>

Several weeks after the summit, Tashkent called for the U.S. to remove its forces within 180 days, however Bishkek later seemed more apprehensive after a visit by U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and a sudden inflow of U.S. foreign aid. After the terrorist bombings in London on July 7, 2005, the discussion of threats to regional stability turned away from the U.S. and again toward terrorism, separatism and extremism. By mid-summer 2005, government leaders in Central Asia were focusing their efforts against an unsavory alliance of drug traffickers and radical Islamic agitators, as the primary threat, with some pointing to a revival of Hizb-ut-tahrir as the chief source of instability.

### C. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

The ebbs and flows of the SCO and its members’ perceptions of threat make an analysis of what it is, as an organization, problematic over its lifetime. The lack of evidence of an alliance is deafening to those that espouse the SCO is the result of an anti-American foreign policy sentiment. The notion of a modern day “concert” of Central Asia and the omnibalancing approach has merit, but only to a point. Yes, the Central Asian republics’ authoritarian regimes are interested in regime survival, which is strongly supported by Russian and Chinese interests in maintaining the status quo. However, these are not short-term interests. The SCO reflects more of an institutionalized

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<sup>100</sup> “Tajikistani Opposition Leader Claims US Presence Motivates SCO Declaration,” *Dushanbe Avesta* WWW-Text in Russian, 6 July 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706318030. Muhiddin Kabiri, is the first deputy leader of the opposition Islamic Rebirth Party of Tajikistan.

<sup>101</sup> “Kyrgyzstan: Foreign Minister Details Stationing of Foreign Bases on SCO Territory,” *Moscow ITAR-TASS* in English, 6 July 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050706027065.

approach, not only in the security sphere, but also in economic cooperation needed for resolving dilemmas of common interest and promoting regional stability, security and development.

International regime theory is very appealing based on the evidence reviewed. This theory would categorize the SCO as an institutionalized framework for solving dilemmas of common interests; although the importance of bilateral relations within the framework speaks toward states pursuing their self-interests. Russia seems to act more short-term than the Chinese who have adopted more of a long-term orientation. However, none of these approaches thoroughly accounts for which Russian and Chinese interests are priori or why these interests were formed. In order to resolve the impasse on this point the next two chapters will look at the constraints of the SCO on individual actors, as well as provide an analysis of what is driving Russian and Chinese interests and motivations in Central Asia, and thus, how they view the rationale for the SCO.

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## **IV. THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE TOWARD THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

What is driving Russia's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)? In order to understand Russian motivations behind their participation in the SCO, one must first consider the broader Russian elite views and policies toward Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This chapter will focus on the internal Russian political debates over the post-Soviet Russian identity. It will also examine Russia's strategic incentives, economic agenda and security concerns in Central Asia surrounding the initial establishment of the Shanghai-Five during the Yeltsin presidential administration to the SCO in its current form under President Putin. Russia's interest in the Shanghai-Five was driven by a desire to resolve long standing border disputes with China and the creation of a new strategic partnership. Today, the SCO supports key Russian interests in Central Asia, including cooperation over anti-terrorism activities and the opening of new avenues for economic growth. However, the SCO, which includes China, is only one of many primarily Russian-led multilateral organizations operating within Central Asia.

During the Russian transition from the Soviet era, several regional and global events influenced Russia's identity and foreign policy outlook. These events include: the Tajik civil war; the 1994 rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and their support for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Uzbekistan; the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis; the 1999 Kosovo crisis paired with NATO's eastward expansion; and the events of September 11, 2001, which renewed U.S. strategic engagement and interests in Central Asia. These international and domestic events have shaped the way the Russian political elite view Central Asian regional developments in relation to global politics.

Even though the multilateral cooperation achieved within the SCO has been notable, this chapter argues that Moscow's choice to operate through bilateral sidebars within and multilaterally outside of the SCO framework, reveals its attachment to great power status and its competitive nature regarding its interests in Central Asia. Russia's

foreign policy can be seen as an attempt to “keep up with the Jones” in Central Asia, whether economically with China or as a reliable security manger through the CIS CSTO *vis-à-vis* the U.S. and NATO. Russia’s near-term competition and cooperation is not a response against a particular threat, such as from another state or revolutionary transnational actor, but in fact is a response to the threat of continued loss of prestige. The Russian national identity and *velikoderzhavnost* (commitment to great power status) does much to explain Russian foreign policy behavior in Central Asia. Although geopolitics and geoeconomics have played a significant role in shaping Russia’s foreign policy orientation toward Central Asia, and more specifically its interests in the SCO, one might consider them constraining variables.

Wanting to move beyond its current regional power status and limited economic sovereignty toward regained great power status, the Russian political elite have recognized that Russia must be a part of the global community and will avoid policies favoring isolation and disengagement from the West. Corollary, if Russia aspires to return to a great power status, it must avoid being “beaten”.<sup>102</sup> Thus, Russia’s motivations toward the SCO can be viewed as only one of the latest vehicles available for offering a means to make the transition back to a great power possible. In order to navigate this agenda, in the face of increasing geopolitical and geoeconomic pressures from both East and West, Russia has sought its own path by relying on the trappings of

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<sup>102</sup> The concept of being “beaten” is familiar outcome to be avoided based on Russia’s historical experience in how Russia has pursued its Eurasianist orientation. Russia’s current policies should not be necessarily considered “pro” or “anti” any particular country, but in fact represents a “pro-Russian” policy and that Russia’s interest come first. According to Stalin: “To slow down the tempo of industrialization means to fall behind. And those who fall behind are beaten. The history of old Russia consisted, among other things, of constantly being beaten for her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol Khans ... She was beaten by the Swedish feudals. She was beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the Anglo-French capitalists. Everybody beat her—for backwardness ... If you are backward, if you are weak, you are in the wrong, you can be beaten and enslaved. If you are strong, then you are in the right, you must be treated with care ... We have fallen fifty to one hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must cross this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we will be crushed.” Misha Tsyplkin, “Preparing for World War II.” (Lecture at Navy Post Graduate School, Monterey, California, 19 April 2005) translated from I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1951), vol. 13, pp. 38-39.

its unique identity.<sup>103</sup> The following sections of this chapter outline the nature of events shaping the Russian “Eurasianist” foreign policy orientation, as well as the legitimacy of Russia’s search for its regional and geopolitical identity and interests, which is codified in the SCO.

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section describes the evolution and growing consensus of Russian foreign policy decisions toward Central Asia in the Yeltsin and Putin administrations. Those identified as Eurasianists or pragmatic nationalists appear to have won the current policy debate concerning Central Asia. These diverse interests and policy prescriptions that emerged during the internal policy debate of the 1990s exemplifies Russia’s outlook regarding the SCO and its purpose. The second section will lay the foundation of the Russian elites’ strategic incentives and political motivations in Central Asia in an effort to explore if the SCO is a defensive “alliance”. The third section will examine the economic aspects of Russia’s policies toward Central Asia by examining the SCO as an international economic regime. In order to determine if this premise is applicable, it will consider how Russia’s use of bilateral and multilateral approaches, within and outside the SCO, contributed or hindered economic interdependence. The fourth section will examine Russian security interests within the SCO framework. Specifically, it will explore if the threat of the “Three Evils” of international terrorism, extremism and separatism, as well as other non-traditional threats such as narcotics trafficking and international crime, are the primary motivation for Russia’s participation in the SCO. In this view, the SCO could be seen as a regional “collective security” arrangement or a modern “concert” of Central Asia used for maintaining the status quo of regional elites.

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<sup>103</sup> “‘Russia is a country which is still groping painfully for a national project and self-identification as a nation,’ said Masha Lipman, an analyst [sic] at the Carnegie Endowment in Moscow. ‘If we compare Russia with other postcommunist [sic] countries, they opt for Europe as their future. Not Russia; Russia is very uncertain about what its future is about. Having gone astray on its way to find its own identity, it has naturally turned to the past rather than to the future, because the future is so uncertain and the present is so discouraging.’” Robert Parsons, “Russia: Cossack Revival Gathers Momentum,” *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* (5 May 2005) Available from <http://www.rferl.org/> accessed 5 May 2005.

## B. RUSSIAN IDENTITY DRIVEN INTEREST IN CENTRAL ASIA

The Russian elite view of the 1990s policy debate regarding Central Asia is the key to understanding how the Russian national identity is driving Russia's interests for participating within the SCO architecture. In general, there are three influential schools in describing Russia's approach to Central Asia. A "western school" believes the solution to post-communist problems is intimately linked with the West. The "Asiatic" or "Oriental" approach suggests that Russia should recognize and reaffirm its historical roots in the Asiatic cultural and pursue closer relations with those nations surrounding Central Asia. A third approach, "Eurasianism" blends the previously mentioned schools of thinking with special emphasis on Russia's unique geopolitical, historical and cultural position as a "bridge" between Europe and Asia.

Based on an analysis of identity driven interests, this section will lay out the groundwork for answering if Russia sees the SCO as a defensive alliance based on a perceived threat from U.S. hegemony and aggressive foreign policy. The identity debate will also offer evidence for considering whether Russia's economic agenda or regional security issues are the primary factors driving Russian interests in the SCO. For an examination of possibilities, this section will recount the identity debates shaping Russian thinking about Central Asia in the post-Soviet era.

In devising a national policy toward Central Asia, Russia has often blurred the distinction between foreign and domestic affairs. Aspects of Russian and Soviet imperialism with their associated myths and persistent conditions are important in the search for a new Russian identity.<sup>104</sup> Specifically, those Russian elite which espouse the notion of Russia's future destiny as a link between East and West rearticulate a position

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<sup>104</sup> For a detailed discussion of the three most important myths (search for warm water ports, oriental or Asian despotism, and the notion of Russian messianism) and persistent constraints (relative economic-backwardness, permeable frontiers, a multicultural state and society, and cultural marginality) of historical Russian foreign policy see, Alfred J. Rieber, "Persistent factors in Russian foreign policy: an interpretive essay," in *Imperial Russian foreign policy*, trans. and ed. Hugh Ragsdale (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), 315-359. For another discussion of Russian mythical beliefs and behaviors, see Edward L. Keenan, "On Certain Mythical Beliefs and Russian Behaviors," in *The International Politics of Eurasia Vol 1: The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1994), 19-39. For a detailed review of Russia's view toward Asia, specifically Petrine Russia and the emergence of the Eurasian concept in the twentieth century, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "Asia Through Russia Eyes," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asia Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 3-29.

familiar with Tsarist and Soviet leaders.<sup>105</sup> The bottom line associated with Russian cultural arguments about national identity is its commitment to great power status. The remainder of the identity section considers three approaches for Russian identity driven interests: pragmatic nationalism, debates between Russian schools of international relations theory and eurasianism.

### **1. Liberal Westernism, Pragmatic Nationalism and Fundamental Nationalism**

Some analysts suggest the policy debates in the post-Soviet era have been a struggle between several rival camps (e.g. liberals, communists and moderates).<sup>106</sup> Central to this debate is the very identity of the new Russian state. Nicole J. Jackson<sup>107</sup> identifies three rival camps from 1991 through 1996 on the eve of the first Shanghai Forum meeting, which served as the backdrop in understanding policy outcomes based on the conflicts raging throughout the Former Soviet Union (FSU) after the USSR's breakup. These general baskets of ideas included "liberal westernist", "pragmatic nationalist" and "fundamental nationalist", which competed for political dominance in the Russian policy debate. Each of these political elite orientations suggested different policy options and recommendations for addressing Russia's "near abroad" and crises that emerged during the 1990s in the FSU.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Alfred J. Rieber takes important notice of this particular myth and offers two examples. First, "Ivan IV's dream of becoming the middleman between northern Europe and the East India trade by seizing the Volga basin" which never materialized. (Rieber, 325). Second, Nikolai Bukharin, an early Soviet historian, highlighted this dilemma in a speech to the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923: "Soviet Russia lies geographically and politically between two giant worlds—the still strong and unfortunately capitalist-imperialist world of the west and the colossal numbers of the populations of the east which is now in the process of growing revolutionary forces. *And the Soviet republic balances between these two enormous forces, which to a significant degree balances each other*" (Rieber, 354; Originally cited in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 3:231 n. 2, emphasis in Carr).

<sup>106</sup> For various attempts to categorize Russian Foreign policy schools, see: Vladimir Shlapentokh, "'Old', 'New', and 'Post' Liberal Attitudes Toward the West: From Love to Hate," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 199-216; Margot Light, "Foreign Policy Thinking," in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcom and others, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). 33-100; and Dmitri Trenin, *The end of Eurasia: Russia on the border between geopolitics and globalization*, (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001).

<sup>107</sup> Dr. Nicole J. Jackson is Lecturer in Security Studies in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick.

<sup>108</sup> See A. P. Tsygankov, "Mastering Space in Eurasia: Russia's Geopolitical Thinking after the Soviet Break-up," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36 (2003): 104. A. P. Tsygankov identifies at least four categories of conflicts, which emerged in the FSU. The first type of conflict concerns domestic ethnic-based crises with international community visibility (e.g. Caucasus, Moldova, Tajikistan and Chechnya). The second category involves economic conflicts over Caspian Sea energy resources and competition among the newly independent energy dependent FSU 'have not' countries (e.g. Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and

According to A. P. Tsygankov, a Russian scholar in the U.S., the questions posed by the emergence of these conflicts were the following:

If Russia is unable to perform its traditional stabilizing role in the region, who is going to play this vital role? How are analysts to respond to the sudden emergence of new threats when Russia itself is weak and has very limited resources at its disposal? Finally, what exactly is Russia with its new geographical boundaries and how should it reconstruct its traditional geopolitical identity?<sup>109</sup>

For the Russian political elite, the emergence of these conflicts paired with the essential disappearance of what traditionally constituted Russia's sense of geopolitical identity and symbols of national power meant a fundamental new challenge to the overall Russian geopolitical thinking and the Russian national identity. Russian foreign policy orientations became associated with how the Russian elite viewed several categories of ideas. These included questions such as: Should the identity of Russians be based on civic, linguistic or ethnic factors; what role does Russian history play; was the collapse of the USSR a positive or negative event; where Russia's borders should be drawn geographically; the worldview/self-perception of Russia's international position; if Russia had a historic or geographic mission; and what system was best for Russian domestic politics and its economy. The culmination of these ideas of identity then became the source from which to draw upon for prescribing Russian foreign policy orientations and its proposed policy guidelines.

The liberal westernism approach proposed a civic Russian identity based on Russians living in Russia. This approach saw little use for history and viewed the collapse of the USSR as a positive event. It was satisfied with the borders of the Russian federation and saw Russia's role in the international system as a peaceful "normal"

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Tajikistan). The third category of conflicts was generated by domestic political arrangements. These crises involved the former soviet republics' legacy regimes that were unable to protect their citizens' rights during their transition periods. This mixed with the repression of their domestic liberal and religious opposition fostered a growing threat of regional instability and terrorism (e.g. Central Asia and Caucasus). The forth source of conflict derived from the instability of the new borders, especially on Russia's southern tier. The growing illegal immigration and narcotics trafficking (e.g. Sino-Russian and Tajik-Afghan borders) became an emerging threat.

<sup>109</sup> Tsygankov, "Mastering Space in Eurasia: Russia's Geopolitical Thinking after the Soviet Break-up," 104. A. P. Tsygankov goes further to state that the magnitude and persistent presence of these questions has stimulated the rise of geopolitical thinking and geopolitical imagination in Russia over the decade following the Soviet disintegration.

power. This approach favored Russia's relation with the West and sought to imitate liberal democracy and market reforms. It also rejected any Russian unique or historical mission. The liberal westernism foreign policy orientation was directed toward the West with its main threat being a return of communism. Because of its Western focus, relations with the FSU were not deemed significant, but did suggest that Russia's relations with its former republics should be aimed at supporting their sovereignty, equality of the states on par with Russia, and concluded that Russia should avoid becoming entangled or interfering in their new independence.<sup>110</sup>

Pragmatic nationalism favored a linguistic Russian identity and considered Russian-speakers within the FSU as Russians. This approach did not view history as crucial, but rather as important with the collapse of the USSR as a negative event. They identified Russia's borders as the Russian Federation, as well as other parts of the FSU. This attitude took a balance of power worldview. The elites, which took this view, saw Russia as a great power with its purview being the expanse of Eurasia and avowed Russia had a unique geopolitical mission within it. Pragmatic nationalism also favored liberal democracy and market reforms, but emphasized that Russia's own unique conditions must be taken into account. Pragmatic nationalism prescribed that Russia should seek its own path in its foreign policy direction. It saw its relations with the FSU as crucial, especially to protect Russian interests and supporting the rights of Russians in the near abroad during the post-Soviet transition period. Its main source of threat derived from anything that might be considered as threatening Russia's interests in the FSU, such as NATO's eastward expansion or challenges to the Russian Diaspora living throughout the FSU.<sup>111</sup>

Fundamental nationalism was anti-democratic, anti-marketization and blamed the West for the collapse of the USSR. Its worldview judged the outside world as hostile with Russia surrounded by enemies. Russia's geography should be Eurasia, which included the Russian federation, as well as other parts of the FSU. They identified either Russians as the union of ethnic Russians and Slavs in the FSU or ethnic Russians in the

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<sup>110</sup> Nicole J. Jackson, *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, Debates and Actions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 36-37.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid..

Russian Federation or other parts of the FSU. Fundamental nationalism also maintained Russia was still a great power and needed to maintain its empire associated with its historical and divine mission. The two main sources of threat were from the West and a resurgence of pan-Turkism in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Fundamental nationalism, like the pragmatic nationalism approach, also viewed the Russia Federation's relations with the FSU as crucial; however, there was a contradiction in its foreign policy orientation. On one hand, this approach sought an expansionist policy within the FSU to reincorporate certain parts of the FSU, but on the other, it sought an isolationistic foreign policy direction in international affairs.<sup>112</sup>

Jackson finds that by 1996, the “pragmatic nationalism” camp weighed more significantly on “foreign policy choices through the domestic political process by creating road maps which reduced uncertainty and suggested specific policies, and by the institutionalization of the ideas into official policy concepts and doctrine.”<sup>113</sup> Others argue Russia’s new identity driven interests were solidified after 1999, citing the 1998 financial crisis or the 1999 NATO air war in Yugoslavia as the critical events shaping the Russian identity.

During, the Yeltsin administration, the pro-westerners did not view NATO enlargement as a serious threat. Instead, they criticized the Kremlin for its failure to convince the Central and Eastern European countries that Moscow no longer posed a threat to their security.<sup>114</sup> During this period, the first serious alternative to the pro-western leanings of the early Yeltsin administration also emerged. The “Eurasianist” concept espoused the view that Russia, in civilizational terms, had never been part of Europe. Thus, it should choose a “third way” between the West and East. Globally, Russia should be “the bridge” between these civilizations.<sup>115</sup> Starting in 1994, these two paradigms of Russian post-communist foreign policy thinking gradually developed into a

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<sup>112</sup> Jackson, *Russian Foreign Policy and the CIS: Theories, Debates and Actions*, 36-37.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander A. Sergounin, “Russian Post-Communist Foreign Policy Thinking at the Cross-Roads: Changing Paradigms,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 3 no. 3 (September 2000). [e-journal] <[http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/jird/jird\\_sept00sea01.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/jird/jird_sept00sea01.html)> (accessed 20 April 2005). Alexander A. Sergounin, Ph.D., is Professor of Political Science at the Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University, Russia.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

clear foreign policy orientation.<sup>116</sup> The impact of NATO's intervention in the Kosovo crisis in 1999 only served as an additional dynamic in spurring the emergence of such a consensus.<sup>117</sup> The Kosovo Crisis had a long-term impact on Russian foreign policy toward the West, drove Russia to embrace its new orientation and looked increasingly toward China for supporting its common interest issues.<sup>118</sup> The emerging Russian foreign policy consensus based on tacit acceptance of Eurasianism, mixed with pragmatic nationalism, outlined how Russia should behave and participate in its foreign policy. Russian President Vladimir Putin eventually began to discuss Russia's Eurasian identity in his foreign policy speeches. Putin also began reengaging Russia's traditional Asian partners, whose relations had languished during the initial post-communist transition period under Yeltsin's flirtation with the West. Putin soon launched into a series of presidential visits to China, India, Mongolia and North Korea in an effort to support this reorientation of Russian foreign policy.

## 2. Russian Realism and Liberalism

Others have identified a further breakdown of the policy debates based on divisions within the liberal and realist schools of Russian international relations scholarship. Understanding Russian schools of realism is critical for analyzing perceptions of threat and alignment strategies regarding how Russians view NATO, the CIS CSTO and the SCO. Many Russian realists, as well as liberals, view the international order as one which is currently unipolar in nature. However, each views the

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<sup>116</sup> Sergounin, "Russian Post-Communist Foreign Policy Thinking at the Cross-Roads: Changing Paradigms." Sergounin highlights contours of this consensus around several key points: Russia national interests came before any other considerations international social values and that its foreign policy should be subservient (as a means to an end) for Russia's domestic needs; Russia should remain a great power with a strong voice in the international system; The Russian foreign policy elites tacitly accepted a moderate version of Eurasianism, in which Russia should cooperate with all countries in a even handed manner, neither favoring East or West; The Russian 'near abroad' should be at the top of Russia's regional priorities that the Russia should be recognized as the unchallenged leader in the FSU based on its special geopolitical, strategic, economic, and humanitarian interests. Finally, NATO's eastward expansion had to be delayed if not halted by Russia strengthening its military ties with CIS states, China, and India while maintaining a limited security issue dialogue with NATO. Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> For an excellent analysis of Russia's foreign policy prior to and after NATO's 1999 Operation ALLIED FORCE and the formation of consensus, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, "The final triumph of the Pax American? Western intervention in Yugoslavia and Russia's debate on the post-Cold War order," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34 (2001): 133-156.

<sup>118</sup> Such as supporting a multipolar world and toting increased importance of the United Nations for debating the legitimacy of military interventions, if not outright preventing military interventions without UN Security Council Resolutions which were seen as setting a dangerous precedent and a destabilizing force within the international system. Tsyganov, 153.

pillars of the world order differently. The Russian liberals' emphasize democratic institutions and norms<sup>119</sup> while Russian realists prefer power centers or poles.<sup>120</sup> Liberal ideas dominated in the first half of the 1990s followed by the reemergence of realism in the second half of the 1990s. Those that study this literature contend that since 1997, the idea of balance of power has returned in official Russian rhetoric and foreign policy discussions, which is prior to the Asian financial crisis and NATO's Operation Allied Force. Increasingly, Russian foreign policy became defined in terms of supporting a multi-polar balance of power in the international system.<sup>121</sup>

However, there is room for disagreement among Russian realists, especially in threat perceptions. Some realists, as represented on the influential Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, favor concentrating on the CIS. They recognize that while Russia remains in a weakened economic position, Russian foreign policy resources will be limited and that domestic imperatives should be the priority for solving a number of pressing internal problems over foreign policy initiatives. Another group favors a "Russia–China axis against the U.S. and supports establishing deeper economic cooperation with other Asian countries in response to global challenges. Others support alliances with Western countries, including relationships with both the U.S. and the EU, "but only on conditions acceptable to Russia."<sup>122</sup> These policy prescriptions are

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<sup>119</sup> The most mainstream group of Russian liberals is that of the so-called westerners, who acknowledge Russia's dissimilarities with the West, but attribute these variations with the Russia's backwardness. However, within the westerners there are also deep divisions and disagreement. While all generally agreed that Russia must adopt from the West, the westerners vary on the dilemma of which West to follow. Some see the U.S. as the ultimate model to emulate, while others associate Russia's progress with learning from the experiences of Germany, and Northern and Eastern Europe. See Pavel A. Tsygankov and Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Dilemmas and promises of Russian liberalism," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37 no. 1 (2004): 53-70. Pavel A. Tsygankov (Moscow State University); Andrei P. Tsygankov (Department of International Relations/Political Science, San Francisco State University).

<sup>120</sup> Russian realists are concerned over issues related to the structure of the international system as well as Russia's strategy for adjusting to the post-Cold war international environment. In general, Russian realists share similar views of the U.S. however; they diverge on foreign policy orientations. A common realist theme is that any Russian foreign policy strategy must be solely based upon national interests from the outset and on the state's resolve in defending these national interests in relations with the outside world. A large number of Russian "realists also do not trust the US, pointing to multiple examples of unilateralism, arrogance even towards its allies, disregard for international organizations, and excessive reliance on the use of force." See Tatyana A. Shakleyina and Aleksei D. Bogaturov, "The Russian Realist school of international relations," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37 no. 1 (2004): 37-51 [42]. Tatyana A. Shakleyina (Institute of the United States and Canada, Moscow); Aleksei D. Bogaturov (Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Moscow).

<sup>121</sup> Shakleyina and Bogaturov, 42.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

attributable to divergent external threat perceptions. On one side, there are those that associate the primary threat emanating from U.S. hegemony with an increasingly aggressive foreign policy in an effort “to turn the world into an American sphere of influence.”<sup>123</sup> The opposing viewpoint is that the U.S. is not the main threat. For these Russian realists:

Russia must cooperate with the US and other countries in addressing more serious threats, such as controlling nuclear and conventional arms proliferation, terrorism, and drug-trafficking. This group faults [the] US not for its hegemonic foreign policy, but rather for the inadequate attention it gives to Moscow’s similar interests in addressing these threats.<sup>124</sup>

The policy “position of the majority of Russian realists is one of pragmatism,” according to Shakleyina and Bogaturov, which “is significantly different from the views of both the liberals and of the realists of extreme orientation. At the core of these differences lies the question of the very identity of the Russian State.”<sup>125</sup> Russian “realists believe that [the] Russian identity should be associated with the historical tradition of a great power.”<sup>126</sup> Shakleyina and Bogaturov argue that E. Ya. Batalov’s view of ‘*Velikoderzhavnost* (commitment to great power status) is at the heart of the culture and psyche of Russia. This cultural archetype will continue to shape Russian perceptions of international events, regardless of its internal conditions.”<sup>127</sup> Based on the foregoing, if Russian realism maintains a central position in the foreign policy debate within the inner circles of the Kremlin, then one might expect that any political, economic or security motivations toward the SCO are only part of a short-term solution to a means of achieving great power status in the long-term. One might also argue that Russia is using the SCO as part of a long-term strategy to re-exert its hegemony over Central Asia. Additionally, one can expect to see fluctuations in alliance partners over time. This will largely depend on which Russian realist group has the most influence in Russian foreign policy circles at any given moment in time.

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<sup>123</sup> Shakleyina and Bogaturov, 42.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Eurasianism

In order to address how Russia's foreign policy thinking has developed toward securing its cultural, political and economic presence in Central Asia, this section will now turn to an analysis of the foreign policy orientation championed by the "Eurasianists". Eurasianism encompasses a broad set of the ideas and views toward the Russian national identity and foreign policy orientation. Specifically, Eurasianists emphasize "the uniqueness of the Russian geopolitical, historic and cultural position as a 'bridge' between Europe and Asia."<sup>128</sup> According to their mantra Russia should espouse Russian values and reject the subjugation of its interests to anyone else's. In addition, "Russia should take advantage of their peculiar qualities and enrich itself by establishing ties with both the West and the Orient."<sup>129</sup>

A. P. Tsygankov sets out a number of competing paradigms as an explanatory framework for schools of Russian geopolitical thinking. His analysis is based on the collective works of several Russian academicians and authors who have a broader audience and are politically active. Each offers different solutions for resolving problems associated with Russia's post-communist experience, based on different assumptions about Russia's role in the Eurasia region and the international system. There is also some common ground among these various schools of thought regarding Russia's political borders and external threats.

The "westernizers" are satisfied with contemporary Russia Federation borders and can be closely associated with Jackson's "liberal westernism" in their preferences for adjustment and democratization based on a western-shaped interdependence. On the other end of the spectrum are the "expansionists", similar to Jackson's "fundamental nationalists," who maintain a hard line position of Russia as a continental empire and see Russia's political borders in Eurasia as beyond the FSU. Their position is that Russian

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<sup>128</sup> Andrei Kortunov and Andrei Shoumkin, "Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence," in *Ethnic Challenges beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perceptions of the Central Asian Conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhong and Rouben Azizian (London: Macmillan, 1998), 11-12. Andrei Kortunov\_(Chairman of the Board of the Moscow Public Science Foundation);

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 12. Interestingly, the authors point out the Central Asia regimes, like Russia, weight several different approaches to foreign policy. However, they do not associate Russia entirely with the West, but as a separate factor when developing 'vectors of orientation' in their foreign policy crafting.

security goals in Eurasia should be power. While pursuing this security strategy in Eurasia, Russia should seek unlimited political-military expansion and form alliances with Germany, Japan and Italy. For this school, the primary external threat is from Atlanticism. The support base for the “expansionist” resides in hard-line military and nationalistic movements (e.g. “Eurasia” and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s Liberal Democratic Party).<sup>130</sup>

The “stabilizers” and “geoéconomists” agree with the “westernizers” that Russia’s political borders in Eurasia should be satisfied with the current Russian Federation’s geographic area. However, they support a different vision of Eurasia, as an intersection of economic and cultural influences. The “stabilizers” advocate Russia’s security goals in Eurasia should be “stability” while the “geoéconomists” promote “development.” To this end both take the position that Russia should pursue a multi-vector foreign policy with no main partners, but disagree on how to pursue such a strategy. The “stabilizers” favor politico-military balancing and champion state-led geoconomics projects. The “geoéconomists” seek transregional economic developments through state and private initiatives. These two schools view the external environment as great power competition under interdependence and pluralism with the main source of threat to Russia being geopolitical and geoconomics pressures from both the East and West. The “stabilizers” support base derives from the state bureaucracy and nationally oriented private sector, while state-oriented parties, some liberal political movements, and the national/regional oriented private sector, back the “geoéconomists” approach.<sup>131</sup>

The “civilizationists” agree with the “stabilizers” and “geoéconomists” threat perceptions from East and West, but see these geopolitical and geoeconomic pressures as more dangerous and threatening to the survival of Russian security goals in Eurasia. This school considers Russia’s political borders as the FSU. They back a Russian security strategy in Eurasia as a blend of moderate politico-military expansion with geoconomics

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<sup>130</sup> Tsygankov, “Mastering space in Eurasia: Russia’s geopolitical thinking after the Soviet break-up,” 111-112.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

autarchy. To pursue this policy, Russia should look to China, India and the other Eurasian states as its main partners. The support base for this orientation is General Zyugnov and the Russian Communist Party.<sup>132</sup>

Based on the question of whether the SCO reflects the formation of an alliance, a “concert” or an “economic regime”, this chapter contends that the following best articulates a specific foreign policy position for each group. The “civilizationists” best exemplify the view of the SCO as an alliance; the “stabilizers” approach offers the best explanation toward the “concert” of Central Asia premise; the “Geoeconomists” position suggests the most convincing argument for the SCO as an economic regime. These three categories combined with Jackson’s pragmatic nationalists and the previous section coverage of the Russian pragmatic realism seem to offer the most compelling explanations as the matrix with which to further analyze Russia’s activities within Central Asia and the SCO framework.

In sum, the pragmatic nationalists, Eurasianists and Russia pragmatic realists combine to form a consensus around which the Russian identity drives the foreign policy decision-making process. In general, all maintain that Russia has a unique geographic mission, which encompasses in entirety of Eurasia but differ on whether Russia’s security goals in Eurasia should be survival, stability or development. Additionally, they agree that Russia should be a great power, seeking its own interests within that space. Based on these characteristics, as well as others outlined above, one could surmise that Russian interest in the SCO is only temporary. The multilateral SCO offers Russia another mechanism for balancing against U.S. while bandwagoning with the Chinese as it continues its post-Soviet transition. The SCO offers Russia a multilateral forum to bridge the gap between East and West in its economic development. Cooperation in the SCO framework should be seen as serving Russia’s interests primarily first. Collaboration within the SCO is only tactical steps in the game of great power politics and not some sort of altruistic or softening of Russia’s identity or its interests.

Up to 2004, some Russian scholars argue that despite remaining tensions between Russia and the West, Putin “needed to solicit the support of the West for his domestic

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<sup>132</sup> Tsygankov, “Mastering space in Eurasia: Russia’s geopolitical thinking after the Soviet break-up,” 111-112.

reformist project, creating a friendly and predictable external environment and demonstrating that Russia is a trustworthy actor in the world affairs.”<sup>133</sup> One can conclude that Putin’s support over a broad range of issues, including crossing all lines in the sand and making hitherto unimaginable concessions to the U.S. would precluded any notion that the SCO currently is a defensive alliance against the U.S.<sup>134</sup> According to Medvedev, Putin is bucking the norms of traditional Russian geopolitical thinking. Even today, he argues that while even today most of the Russian foreign policy elite still harbor the belief that territory is “sacrosanct and therefore strategic, while alliances, treaties and norms were shifting and tactical. Putin seeks to reverse this paradigm, treating territory as a tactical resource and an alliance with the West as a strategic goal.”<sup>135</sup> Putin’s move is away from a spatially defined national interest to a functionally defined Russian national interest. Medvedev contends:

For the first time in the Russian history, national interest is not linked to sheer power and territorial control, but rather to domestic reform, prosperity and efficiency of governance. Putin still envisions Russia as a power, but in a different sense; his policy is not pro-Western ... but pro-Russian, of a pragmatic variety. ... Putin’s policy of anchoring is driven by enlightened self-interest: he needs the West for Russia to succeed in a globalising [sic] world.<sup>136</sup>

Other analysts continue to maintain that the foreign policy of the Russian elite, for 2005 and beyond, continues to be at a fork in the road, whether to further integrate with the western world or continuing to seek a revival of great power status.<sup>137</sup> However, this

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<sup>133</sup> Sergei Medvedev, “Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity,” in *Russia and the West at the Millennium: Global Imperatives and Domestic Politics*, eds. Sergei Medvedev, Alexander Konovalov, and Sergei Ozobishchev (George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2003): 50.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. Medvedev identifies these remarkable concessions as Putin’s agreeing to NATO’s second wave of enlargement in 2002, which included the Baltic States, to outright dismissing the U.S decision to withdrawal from the 1972 AMB Treaty as “no serious threat to Russian security.” Putin was viewed as being indifferent to Russia’s ‘near abroad’ as the U.S. deployed forces to Central Asia to wage war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or when the U.S. special forces were dispatched to Georgia. These were in essence defiant moves in the face of vehement opposition of nearly the entire Russian political and military establishments.

<sup>135</sup> Medvedev, “Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity,” 51.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> For example see, Igor Torbakov, “Russia Faces Foreign Policy Debate for 2005,” *Eurasia Insight* (18 January 2005), available from [Eurasianet.Org <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011805\\_pr.shtml>](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011805_pr.shtml) (accessed 18 January 2005).

characterization of the critical strategic dilemma is overplayed. Based on the foregoing, Russian foreign policy choices need to be analyzed as short-term tactics to achieve the long-term goal of restoring its *velikaya derzhava* (great power) status.

The constructivist approach offers a compelling case for explaining that Russia's interest in the SCO. Primarily driven by a change in Russian national identity, resulting from international and domestic events, gave Moscow a new set of priority interests associated with an East-West bridge strategy to achieve great power status again. However, geopolitical and geoeconomic factors may also offer a more compelling case and reach different conclusions for what is the primary motivation behind Russia's specific interest in this one regional-level organization? To consider this query this chapter will now consider if Russia views the SCO primarily as an alliance, a "concert" or an economic regime by considering its strategic incentives, economic agenda, and security interests in Central Asia.

### C. RUSSIAN STRATEGIC INCENTIVES IN CENTRAL ASIA

Russia's strategic incentives in Central Asia are based on five points. First, Russia needs to establish close partnerships with the regional states to promote regional stability. Second, Russia requires unimpeded transit rights across Central Asia for the preservation of important partnerships with China, India and Iran. Third, the continuation of a common economic space with Central Asia can aid Russia's path to economic modernization. Fourth, Russia should use Central Asia's geostrategic potential for practical military needs and in the preservation of Russia's standing as a regional and world power. Finally, Russia's leading role in the region must be recognized by the international community.<sup>138</sup> These core interests clearly have strong geopolitical aspect, but do not necessarily mean that Russia's strategic incentives in Central Asia would lead Russia to enter into an alliance with China against the U.S.

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<sup>138</sup>: Dmitry Trofimov, "Russia and the United States in Central Asia: Problems, Prospects and Interests," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 19, no. 1 (2003): 72-82.

Russia's long-term interest in Central Asia is directly tied to its national security and economic modernization.<sup>139</sup> These general trends form a pivot around which interests of the Russian elites clash. The SCO provides Russia an excellent opportunity as the mechanism for addressing the main problems associated with conflicts over disputed territories, the rise of political and radical Islam, and the fate of the Russian-speaking population.<sup>140</sup> But do Russia's strategic incentives in Central Asia support the assumption that the SCO is a Russia defensive alliance based on a perceived threat from U.S. hegemony and aggressive foreign policy?<sup>141</sup> Roy Allison contends, "Russia and China have at times sought to use the SCO as a macroregional balancing mechanism—against the United States—though the Central Asian states are more interested in the existence of a balance between Russia and China in this body."<sup>142</sup>

In the first few years after the Soviet breakup, in the 1990s Russia's policy toward Central Asia, with the exception of Kazakhstan, did not feature high on the scale of Russian political priorities.<sup>143</sup> Within the CIS as a whole, Russia placed greater importance on the Slavic republics and the Caucasus, whereas Central Asia was largely ignored. However, after civil war erupted in Tajikistan and with the rise of the Taliban in

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<sup>139</sup> Irina D. Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 8. Irina Zviagelskaia, a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow identifies these long-term interests as follows: "political and economic stability (the absence of interstate and internal conflicts and acute economic crises); the preservation of the various contacts between Russia and Central Asian countries and the prevention of a vacuum that can be filled with forces hostile to Russia; ensuring Central Asia's ecological security; the prevention of the spread of chauvinism and Islamic extremism; the prevention of the spread of terrorism, drug-trafficking and arms-smuggling; the preservation of communications crossing Russia and access to new transport arteries and to oil and gas pipelines oriented to the 'far abroad'; ensuring the security of the Russian population." Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> For analyses of the Russian policy debate over Russians in Central Asia in the 1990s, see Andrei Kortunov and Sergei Lounev, "Russia and Russians in Central Asia," in *Ethnic Challenges beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perceptions of the Central Asian Conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhong and Rouben Azizian (London: Macmillian, 1998), 93-111.

<sup>141</sup> For an analysis regarding the early prospects for the formation of a separate 'security community' among the Central Asian CIS based upon threat perceptions and military doctrine, see Roy Allison, *Military Forces in the Soviet Successor States: an Analysis of the Military Policies, Force Dispositions and Evolving Threat Perceptions of the Former Soviet States* (London: Brassey's for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993), 54-62.

<sup>142</sup> Roy Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures and Security Management in Central Asia," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (May 2004): 468.

<sup>143</sup> For an analysis of pre/post 9/11 Russian and Kazakh cooperation, see: Vitaly V. Naumkin, "Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, ed. Robert Legvold (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 39-65.

Afghanistan, Central Asia was only then recognized as an integral part of the zone of Russia's special interests.<sup>144</sup> While Russia was trying to work out a coherent strategy toward Central Asia, an opportunity appeared in the Shanghai Five to reassert its influence in Central Asia. During the early 1990s Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and China began to vie for influence in Central Asia to fill the vacuum created as Russia retreated from their decade long war in Afghanistan.<sup>145</sup> Specifically, this strategic retreat from Central Asia generated new fears concerning China's growing presence in southern Kazakhstan and its growing influence in Kyrgyzstan, as well as concern for "the likely spillover of the Afghan conflict into Tajikistan," further destabilizing a region already impacted by the Tajik civil war.<sup>146</sup> Turkey was particularly worrisome to the Russian leadership. Turkey's forays into Central Asia paired with other Western powers, was seen as an attempt by outside forces "to isolate Russia from the Islamic world, and particularly such important geo-strategic partners as Iran and Pakistan."<sup>147</sup>

As the 1990s progressed, the Russian political elite across the political spectrum were forced to reconsider the "special relationship" between Russia and Central Asia. The heavy pro-Western accent during the early Yeltsin administration diminished as those that favored an Asiatic approach gained political and economic influence.<sup>148</sup> The

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<sup>144</sup> For detailed analysis of the impact of debates on Russian policy outputs in the CIS region see Nicole J. Jackson, *Russian foreign policy and the CIS: theories, debates and actions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), esp. chps 3 and 4, pp 27-78; For a detailed discussion of the patterns of inter-state relations with in the CIS, see Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber, "The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-1998: Stagnation and Survival," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 3 (May, 1999): 379-415.

<sup>145</sup> Kortunov and Shoumkin, "Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence," 17-18. In addition to outside influences Russia became increasing concerned about the five Central Asian states forming their own regional organizations, such as the Central Asian Regional Council (presumably based loosely on the Gulf Co-operation Council) which would further undermine the CIS and the CIS Treaty on Collective Security.

<sup>146</sup> Irina D. Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, 1.

<sup>147</sup> Kortunov and Shoumkin, "Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence," 18. Of particular note, the authors identify Russian First Deputy Prime Minister A. Shokhin's reaction to the Turkish idea of creating a customs union, which a majority of the Central Asian newly independent states supported. According to Kortunov and Shoumkin, A. Shokhin "declared that the Central Asian regimes had only one choice to make, i.e. between integration with Turkey (alternatively Turkey and Pakistan) or with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus...Central Asia could not be involved in both." Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> As a result of the bitter internal political conflicts and success of the Liberal Democratic Party, led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, in the December 1993 Russian Parliamentary elections, the Russian elites in power had to change their pro-western leanings. By 1994, several trends emerged in Russia's foreign policy toward Central Asia. Namely, the success of the opposition forced the Kremlin leadership to take into account the opposition's views in official pronouncements and positions toward Central Asia. See

influential industrial groups—dependent on Central Asian raw materials and semi-finished products, as well as local markets for their own goods—found allies in the communists, who had their own ambitions of restoring the Soviet legacy. Others called for “Eurasian unity” as a prerequisite for Russian-Central Asian relations, with shades of Russian imperialism and regaining influence in Russia’s traditional “sphere of influence.”<sup>149</sup> Finally, the Russian military-industrial complex weighed in. They “perceived the disintegration of the Soviet strategic space and depth, especially at the Southern flanks, as a direct threat to Russian security interests.”<sup>150</sup>

By July 1995, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev stated “the CIS countries were now at the top of Russia’s foreign policy agenda.”<sup>151</sup> However, others argue that Russia’s foreign policy toward Central Asia had matured since 1991, but remained “in a state of flux.”<sup>152</sup> The lack of clear-cut objectives was reflected in Russia’s relations with the CIS in both bilateral and multilateral organizations. Moscow’s policies were not the product of a well-thought out strategy, but instead a reaction to emerging crises. Furthermore, “Russia was unprepared for this role that required it to develop a new conception of its place in the transformed geopolitical environment.”<sup>153</sup> This was highlighted by the arguments and disagreements, which took place among Russia’s political elite, economist circles and military leaders over Russia’s real interests.<sup>154</sup> Irina D. Zviagelskaia, comments “Russia’s real interests in the various regions of the post-Soviet space, including Central Asia, and of its main policy priorities, [were] often replaced by attempts by individual groupings, parties and leaders to use a given subject for their selfish ends.”<sup>155</sup>

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Kortunov and Shoumkin, “Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence,” 16-17.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>151</sup> Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, 3.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> For internal military factors influencing foreign policy decision making in Russia, see Roy Allison, “Military Factors in Foreign Policy,” in *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, Neil Malcom and others, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). 231-285.

<sup>155</sup> Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, 4.

Andrei Kortunov, Chairman of the Moscow Public Science Foundation also agrees that Russia's Central Asian policy has been constantly subjected to these conflicting interests and paradigms. He cautions that under these pressures "Russian policy towards Central Asia has become more versatile but also at the same time less predictable, compared to the 'good old Soviet times' when fewer basic factors were at work shaping its main parameters."<sup>156</sup> Under this frame of mind, one can begin to understand Russia's motivations toward the SCO. Accordingly, "Russian policy towards Central Asia has developed along three intertwined lines: political, military and economic."<sup>157</sup>

The evidence presented in this section suggests that geopolitical and geoeconomic pressures from the East and the West are the main threat to Russia and not an aggressive U.S. foreign policy. The events of September 11, 2001, changed the mindset after NATO's 1999 air campaign in the Balkans. If Russia still perceived the U.S. as a priority threat, then they would not have been one of the most supportive countries in the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. Moscow stood by idly as the U.S. began to mass forces in and around Afghanistan. Russia facilitated U.S. efforts to negotiate basing rights in Central Asia. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were able to negotiate bilaterally with the U.S. with little interference from Moscow. Moscow's perception of the priority threat now came from international terrorism and Islamic fundamentalists, which was largely viewed as a domestic internal security issue prior to 9/11 (e.g. Chechnya). Russia sought to engage the U.S. in this effort because they could not financially or militarily engage this task on their own. While U.S.-Russian security cooperation was based on similar threat perceptions, it is hard to imagine the Russians viewing the SCO as a defense alliance against the U.S. under the balance of threat theory.

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<sup>156</sup> Kortunov and Shoumkin, "Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence," 12.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 16.

#### D. RUSSIAN ECONOMIC AGENDA IN CENTRAL ASIA

The critical reassessment of Russia's modern self-perception and self-identity by various groups during the 1990s has provided different responses—from integration to isolationism, from liberalism to Eurasianism—but there had been a constant “shared sentiment that from *shaping* the world Russia should turn to *adaptation* to the external environment.”<sup>158</sup> At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Russia now faces a new challenge of adapting to globalization.<sup>159</sup> The 1998 financial crisis highlighted Russia's economic vulnerability and dependence on other states, while the 1999 Kosovo war and NATO enlargement showed Russia's geopolitical predicament. Sergei Medvedev, of the George C. Marshall European Center for Strategic Studies, summarizes this dualism as:

[T]he 1998 crisis demonstrated [that] Russia is irresistibly drawn (or ‘seduced’) into the world of geo-economy, and [the] NATO enlargement and Kosovo war illustrated that Russia is losing her traditional role [in] the world of geopolitics. Taken together, these developments mapped Russia's gradual drift from geopolitics to geo-economy.<sup>160</sup>

This indicates that Russia no longer considered the U.S. as the primary threat. Thus, the explanation for the existence of the SCO was not based on alignment strategies. Instead, Russia views geo-economic security as its focus. The SCO presents Russia an opportunity to further its aim of returning to great power status through economic development strategies. Russia's “bridge” concept, using its legacy pipeline system for supplying the energy wealth of Central Asia to Europe and Asia., provides one such solution. Nevertheless, Russia needed any means of hegemony it could muster to control these vital hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia.

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<sup>158</sup> Medvedev, “Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity,” 41.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Medvedev identifies four imperatives associated with globalization: Resources, domestic concerns, economics, and institutional. These imperatives blur the line between domestic and foreign policies. According to Medvedev, under Putin: “Internal actors, challenges, and constraints are increasingly setting the foreign policy agenda, while the external environment increasingly shapes domestic identities and responses. In this fluid environment, the meaning of security is changing in Russia, moving from its modern statist, understanding to new pluralistic discourses, stressing individual and group security and global interdependence.” Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 49. Medvedev considers the move from geopolitics to geo-economics as far from complete; He acknowledges this transition has progressed far enough to a point where Russia is likely to remain anchored in a cooperative framework at the fringe of Western institutions, thus guaranteeing against the likelihood of a radical revision of Russia's foreign and security policy.

## **1. Limited Economic Sovereignty & Domestic Imperatives**

The SCO provides Russia an outlet to meet the challenges and imperatives of globalization. Under Putin's leadership, Russia has charted a new foreign policy agenda "dictated by domestic concerns, an awareness of the systemic crisis ... and a sense of competitive pressures of globalization."<sup>161</sup> Putin's approach is clearly based on the linkage between domestic and foreign policy.<sup>162</sup> Evidence of Russia's energy policy cooperation within the SCO institutional framework would demonstrate Russian commitment to the SCO as an international economic regime. However, Russia's use of bilateral sidebar agreements during SCO annual summits or the use of Russian state mechanisms, such as Gazprom in a hammer-anvil energy policy strategy shows a weakness in the international regime approach to the SCO from the Russian perspective.

Russia's goal of achieving great power status is complicated by the twin challenges of finite resources and the reality that its traditional assets (e.g. strategic rocket forces), have lost their traditional significance. Medvedev contends, "[f]or the first time in her modern history Russia does not have the resources to match her traditional global role."<sup>163</sup> Overall, Russian foreign policy has become more associated with domestic imperatives. Psychologically, the crises in the FSU during the 1980s and 1990s influenced the historically sacred outlook toward territorial thinking, which began to be viewed "in functional terms: is it useful, cost-effective and sustainable?"<sup>164</sup> Regime change, also gave rise to economic interests which, if "not always directly translated into foreign policy acts ... create a pragmatic de-ideologized context for policy-making."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Medvedev, "Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity," 50. Medvedev argues that at the turn of the millennium two major factors are primarily shaping relations between Russia and the West: the rise of Vladimir Putin as Russian president and the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the subsequent Global War of Terrorism.

<sup>162</sup> For another perspective of Putin's economic and security agendas, see Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), esp. chs 4 and 5, pp 51-96.

<sup>163</sup> Medvedev, "Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity," 42.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. Medvedev uses the Russian gas giant, Gazprom, as one example of a company whose strategic interests which might not shape Russian foreign policy, but he paraphrases the old adage about U.S. firm General Motors: "what is good for *Gazprom* is good for Russia." Ibid. 44

Medvedev insists that since the collapse of the USSR “the economic variable has become much more closely, indeed intimately, integrated into the global market at various levels. Russia’s integration into the world economy is primarily driven by gas and oil exports.”<sup>166</sup> Russia “has 33 percent of the world’s natural gas reserves and provides 40 percent of Europe’s natural gas needs.”<sup>167</sup> The final imperative Russia faces in globalization is with respect to international and regional institutions.<sup>168</sup> The SCO is just one example.

Moscow’s first attempts to establish the Eurasian Economic Community, on par with and as an EU counterpart, failed to materialize.<sup>169</sup> Later attempts to form a Common Economic Space among Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan also failed to develop on the eve of the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections. These unsuccessful attempts forced Moscow to reconsider its multilateral approach to its relation with its former republics as all were transitioning in the post-Soviet space. In the end, Russia realized it needed to shift its policy focus of its economic efforts from multilateral arrangements toward stronger bilateral relations to jump-start its modernization and increase its economic sovereignty.

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<sup>166</sup> Russia also has other interfaces with the global economy including: institutions which hold Russia’s external debt and Westerner investors in the Russian Stock Market (RTS). For other factors and dilemmas Russia faces while continuing to integrate into the world economy, see Yevgeny Gavrilenkov and Wolfram Schrettl, “Integration into the World Economy: Russian Dilemmas,” in *Russia and the West at the Millennium: Global Imperatives and Domestic Politics*, eds. Sergei Medvedev, Alexander Konovalov, and Sergei Oznobishchev (George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2003): 125-135.

<sup>167</sup> Peter Rutland, “Shifting Sands: Russia’s Economic Development and Its Relations with the West,” in *Russia and the West at the Millennium: Global Imperatives and Domestic Politics*, eds. Sergei Medvedev, Alexander Konovalov, and Sergei Oznobishchev (George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2003): 116.

<sup>168</sup> See Medvedev, “Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity,” 45.

<sup>169</sup> For coverage, see: Olga Tarasova, “Vladimir Putin Travels to Astana: Leaning on a Neighbor’s Shoulder; Russia and Kazakhstan Work New Integration Programs,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 3 October 2000, FBIS Document ID: CEP20001003000177; Yelena Lashkina, “Transformation of Customs Union. Eurasian Economic Community Wishes To Intensify Integration,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 6 October 2000, FBIS Document ID: CEP20001009000155; Yelena Lashkina, “Moscow and Astana Struggle for Leadership; The Eurasian Economic Community Will Soon Be Set Up,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 7 October 2000, FBIS Document ID: CEP20001010000078; Andrey Sharafov, “Russia Could Derive Benefit From Eurasian Economic Community,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 14 October 2000, FBIS Document ID: CEP20001017000318; and Yekaterina Tesemnikova, “Kiev and Tashkent Continue Their Rapprochement. Presidents Kuchma and Karimov Do Not Believe in the Future of the Eurasian Community,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 13 October 2000, FBIS Document ID: CEP20001016000290.

The 1998 Russian crisis and associated “financial collapse highlighted the overall systemic crisis in Russia and indicated the limited domestic resources for the protection of ‘national interests’ in foreign policy.”<sup>170</sup> The quick retreat of portfolio investors from the emerging markets and the sharp fall of world oil prices to levels far below Russia’s production costs demonstrated the true limits of Russia’s economic sovereignty.<sup>171</sup> The financial “crisis defined the parameters of decreasing state capacity in Russia, but also underscored Russia’s growing dependence on the global financial and raw materials markets.”<sup>172</sup> For the first time, Russia found itself integrated into the world economy to a far “greater, and riskier, extent than had been envisaged by the masterminds of the Soviet oil policy in the 1970s and 1980s, and the architects of the Russian financial markets in the 1990s.”<sup>173</sup> In the final analysis, the 1998 crisis accentuated “the fact that Russian foreign policy is staged under the conditions of limited economic sovereignty of the nation.”<sup>174</sup>

## **2. Energy as a Strategic Instrument in Central Asia**

These conditions of limited economic sovereignty forced Russia to reevaluate its global and regional economic postures. Russia began to use the energy trade as a strategic instrument in Central Asia.<sup>175</sup> In the face of increased U.S. foreign direct investment and Russia’s own limited financial assets; Russia generated an energy strategy based on three goals. First, Russia has insisted that the Transneft, the Soviet legacy pipeline system, be given priority use for energy exports from Central Asia. Second, Moscow heavily promoted Russian oil and gas firms and their participation to the maximum extent possible in Central Asian energy projects. Third, Moscow tried “a variety of instruments to block projects that do not promote Russian perceived interests.”<sup>176</sup> Roy Allison, Head of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Royal Institute

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<sup>170</sup> Medvedev, “Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity,” 49.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy,” *International Affairs* 80, no. 2 (March 2004) 290. According to Allison: Russia perceives Central Asia’s “oil and gas resources as both a strategic asset and a strategic instrument.” Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

of Internal Affairs (Chatham House) speculates that these strategies will likely produce a soft hegemony over the Central Asian states and is “likely to result in the medium term form of dependence on Moscow in energy policy [rather] than [in] military policy.”<sup>177</sup>

Russia recently signed a new agreement on the transportation of natural gas with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, that according to some analysts, allocates to each partner a more equitable role than was the case with such agreements in the past, but according to others will bring a further tightening of Russia’s grip on the regional energy trade.<sup>178</sup> In January 2002 Putin called for the creation of a “Eurasian alliance of gas producers”, uniting Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, through their common pipeline system managed by Gazprom.<sup>179</sup> Putin emphasized the importance of such a historical effort, which he said, would be capable of “introducing an element of stability to the transportation of gas on a long-term basis.”<sup>180</sup> While this grand union of gas exporters has not been realized, “Gazprom has been successful in concluding a series of key agreements with Central Asian countries that tied them into long-term structural relationships with Russia.”<sup>181</sup> The first significant deal signed under these new auspices was the creation of KazRosGas. This strategic venture was designed between the Russian state Gazprom and Rosneft companies and Kazakh KazMunayGaz for selling Kazakhstan’s hydrocarbons throughout the CIS. Additionally, the venture called for the

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<sup>177</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy,” 290. For a detailed analysis of why economic ties are increasingly becoming more important in Russia’s foreign policy toward Central Asia, see: Peter Rutland, “Oil, Politics and Foreign Policy,” in *The Political Economy of Russian Oil*, ed. David Lane (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 163–88.

<sup>178</sup> “Russia and Central Asia agree to energy cooperation,” *Agence France Presse*, 1 March 2002. Available from <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>> accessed 11 May 05.

<sup>179</sup> “Russia: TV reports Putin proposal to create ‘Eurasian alliance’ of gas producers’,” *Moscow Russia TV RTR in Russian*, 21 January 2002, FBIS Document ID: CEP20020121000184.

<sup>180</sup> “Russia: Putin calls for alliance of Eurasian gas producers,” *Moscow Interfax in Russian*, 21 January 2002, FBIS Document ID: CEP20020121000144.

<sup>181</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy,” 291.

development and operation of new energy fields and the unification of the regulatory guidelines for controlling the operation of the entire gas transport system. Additionally, Gazprom is seeking a long-term, 25-year agreement on gas exports.<sup>182</sup>

In April 2003, Gazprom achieved a like-minded long-term contract with Turkmenistan.<sup>183</sup> Finally, in May 2003 Gazprom was able to conclude major agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.<sup>184</sup> In essence, the Kremlin through its vassal Gazprom has sought to unify the entire Central Asian pipeline system and lock up Central Asian regimes and their energy resources to Moscow for the long-term.<sup>185</sup> Moscow's use of Gazprom bilaterally demonstrates Russia's desire for pursuing a regional hegemonic policy over access to energy resources and energy transit routes outside of the SCO framework. Russia has also approached China bilaterally when it comes to economic cooperation and not multilaterally within the SCO.

Energy cooperation is also important for Sino-Russian interaction when it comes to the Central Asian states. In October 2004, Putin along with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, visited China. Putin characterized the trip as a "breakthrough both strategically and economically."<sup>186</sup> Details on the talks involved signing thirteen agreements: including finalizing the demarcation accord over their shared 4,200-kilometer border as well as agreeing to a protocol outlining Chinese backing for Russian accession into the

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<sup>182</sup> For further details see "Kazakhstan: Gazprom, Rosneft receive 50 percent share in KazRosGaz," *Moscow Interfax in English*, 21 May 2002, FBIS Document ID: CEP20020521000251; "New Kazakhstan-Russia gas company to have broad remit," *Almaty Interfax-Kazakhstan in Russian*, 21 May 2002, FBIS Document ID: CEP20020521000288; and "Russia, Kazakhstan set up joint venture to sell gas to Europe," *Moscow ITAR-TASS in Russian*, 21 May 2002, FBIS Document ID: CEP20020521000098.

<sup>183</sup> See "Gazprom, Turkmenistan to sign gas contract on 10 April," *Moscow Interfax in English*, 03 April 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030403000163.

<sup>184</sup> "Russia plans to supply Turkmen, Uzbek gas to Kyrgyzstan," *Moscow Prime-TASS in English*, 16 May 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030516000284; "Chief Says Russian Gas Giant May Buy Stake in Kyrgyzstan Company," *Moscow Prime-TASS in English*, 16 May 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030516000101; "Gazprom, Kyrgyzstan government sign cooperation agreement," *Moscow Interfax in English*, 16 May 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030516000037; "Russia's Gazprom Signs 25-Year Agreement With Kyrgyzstan on Gas Extraction, Transit," *Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta in Russian*, 12 May 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030512000249.

<sup>185</sup> For an analysis of these various agreements and their implications, see Marika Karayianni, "Russia's Foreign Policy for Central Asia Passes through Energy Agreements," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 22, no. 4 (2003): 90-96.

<sup>186</sup> Victor Yasman, "Putin's Chinese Card," *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly* 4, no. 41 (22 October 2004). Available from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Online <<http://www.rferl.org/reports/rpw/2004/10/41-221004.asp>> (accessed 7 January 2005). Victor Yasman is a Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council

World Trade Organization.<sup>187</sup> Additionally, Putin heralded an agreement to increase bilateral trade to \$80 billion by 2010, a four fold increase. The Russian delegation also publicized that the Chinese had pledged to invest \$12 billion in Russia's Far East and Siberia, largely in the energy and timber industries and infrastructure projects.<sup>188</sup> These examples underline the basic premise that Sino-Russia relations outside the SCO primarily lies in economic and energy cooperation, rather than a defensive alliance (circa 2004).<sup>189</sup>

### **3. The Outlook: Does Russia view the SCO as an International Economic Regime?**

Russia's economic incentives toward Central Asia are an amalgamation of the "Eurasianist" East-West bridge vision, modern pipeline politics, and reactions to the 1998 financial meltdown. The political debate concerning Russia's Central Asia economic policy has evolved from an initial reluctance to pump money into the more "backward" states to a realization that through energy cooperation lays the path for Russia's move from "a second-rate great power" to a great power again.<sup>190</sup> Russia has by-and-large chosen to employ a bilateral approach to support its economic agenda in Central Asia and China.

For Russia, the SCO remains more of a talk shop on energy pipeline routes rather than a collaborative effort for pooling resources in a long-term economic strategy. Thus, if Russia's interest in the SCO is best described as an international economic regime, then Russian policy actions should be characterized in either one of two ways. The SCO is merely a coordination forum where Russia is not constrained from pursuing separate energy policies from the other members. Another potential characterization of Russia's dealings within the SCO as a regime is based on political power. This approach would

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<sup>187</sup> Yasmann, "Putin's Chinese Card."

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Especially the debate over the planned major oil pipeline from Angarsk in Siberia eastward toward either China or Japan and Korea.

<sup>190</sup> Russian economist L. Fridman cited in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 April 1995, from. Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, 22.

consider Russian business activities as not promoting collective gains. Instead, the SCO reflects Russia's political power to enhance its own economic growth through compulsory strategies to limit the choices of the Central Asian states.

## **E. RUSSIAN SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA**

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin embarked on various projects to sustain a forward security zone or security buffer in Central Asia, with the expressed aim of distancing the Russia Federation from a variety of emerging threats. Moscow chose to emphasize the external nature of these threats to justify a network of military-security arrangements, as well as securing Russian access to military facilities in the Central Asian states.<sup>191</sup> The result of these policies has kept the Central Asian regimes, “to varying degrees, in a form of security dependence on Moscow and confirmed Russia as the primary, if progressively weakening, security manager for the region.”<sup>192</sup>

Omnibalancing would expect to see both external and domestic threats driving alignment choices for maintaining the status quo of the weak Central Asian regimes. However, Russia's choice to highlight the external nature of the threat does not support the view that Russia sees the SCO as a concert. Instead, Russia has chosen to rely on other Russian-led multilateral institutions and sought direct bilateral agreements with individual SCO members in its security strategy in Central Asia.

### **1. Russian Reaction to Crises in the Former Soviet Union**

The foundation of Russia's security and military relations with its Central Asian neighbors are regulated by the May 1992 Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security. Later, this mandate was expanded to include the functions of “collective defense” based on the

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<sup>191</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy,” 285. The Russian military community also played a vital role in the development of security strategies. The major point of disagreement within the military was over perceptions of threat. The different perceptions of threat can be categorized as the threat from NATO expansionism, spillover from Afghanistan, and the build up of Chinese forces in the Xinjiang Province. For a review of the debate over threats and the military's role in shaping policy in Central Asia and the military's practical experiences in the ‘near abroad’ conflicts, specifically use of the military as ‘peacekeepers’, see Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, 29-34.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. These are well analyzed by: Roy Allison, “The military and political security landscape in Russia and the South,” in Rajan Menon, Yuri Fedorov and Ghia Nodia, eds, *Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 42-55; and Roy Allison and Lena Jonson, eds., *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution/Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2002).

impact of the Tajik civil war and the need for direct Russian military intervention.<sup>193</sup> Interestingly both the Central Asian elites and the Tajik opposition were largely “prepared to accept Russia’s role as an intermediary and a direct ‘legitimate’ participant in the process of conflict resolution, if not a guarantor of regional political settlements.”<sup>194</sup> The Taliban’s seizure of Kabul in September 1996 further heightened the awareness of a new threat to regional security in Central Asia. Regional powers, such as Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan quickly reacted in opposition to the Taliban’s growing regional influence. The Taliban’s success in Afghanistan and their zealotry “gave impetus to a new cooperativeness among parties engaged in the inter-Tajik peace talks, as both sides and their foreign patrons recognised [sic] the need for a united front against the Taliban.”<sup>195</sup>

Based on their experience drawn from a series of FSU regional crises, Moscow began to consider that the need for direct military intervention in the future might increase, and thus, new mechanisms were needed to aid Russia’s security policy toward Central Asia.<sup>196</sup> Some have argued that the recent “outbreaks of insurgency and terrorism have created a region-wide sense of alarm that has, in turn, contributed to a renewed sense of urgency to find formulas to enhance cooperation in the region.”<sup>197</sup> The SCO may be one avenue to reduce the costs associated with providing “collective security” in Central Asia; however, the Russian security situation changed after

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<sup>193</sup> Irina D. Zviagelskaia argues the 1992 Treaty was not so much important for its military-strategic value but for its tactical importance to influence Ukraine’s rejection of the very concept of collective security, see Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia*, 33. For a further analysis of Russia’s political debates and military involvement in the Tajik conflict, see Nicole J. Jackson, *Russian foreign policy and the CIS: theories, debates and actions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 140-170.

<sup>194</sup> Kortunov and Shoumkin, “Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence,” 22. The authors identify Central Asia as a unique region in the FSU as opposed to the Trans-Caucasus where conflicting parties have appealed for help, not from Russia, but from multinational organizations such as the UN, CSCE and NATO. They explain this based on three factors. First, the Central Asian Republics are in a geographical weak position as they are surrounded by powerful neighbors and still need Russia to counter balance these potential external threats. Second, the Central Asian states are seriously handicapped by their internal military structures. Third, the Central Asian regimes lack even limited experience in the art of managing and resolving local conflicts.

<sup>195</sup> Gregory Gleason, “Inter-State Cooperation in Central Asia from the CIS to the Shanghai Forum,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 7 (Nov., 2001): 1089.

<sup>196</sup> Kortunov and Shoumkin, “Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of Mutual Perceptions, Policies and Interdependence,” 23. They discuss the political costs and economic burdens associated with such an undertaking.

September 11<sup>th</sup>. Russia recognized the need to pursue a collective security arrangement that included “the need to share security responsibilities in Central Asia related to counterterrorism with western states and even China.”<sup>198</sup> Russia initially accepted the inevitability of enhanced U.S. strategic presence in Central Asia in the build up to Operation Enduring Freedom. Yet in the interlude, Russia’s regional policy has been increasingly “framed in a context of domestic political concerns about Russian strategic displacement in the region.”<sup>199</sup> Since 2002, Putin has shown a greater determination to stem the erosion of Russia’s security posture and influence in the region. Allison contends that under Putin the Russian position toward the anti-terrorism collation forces has been basis on the status of Russia’s own bilateral relations with its former republics.

He has tried various multilateral and bilateral means to reinvigorate his flagging military relationships with Central Asian leaders and revive Russia’s broader military-security influence in Central Asian, using the rationale of a common counterterrorist struggle. In a number of respects, after a short honeymoon period until perhaps spring 2002, these measures have fostered a dynamic of rivalry rather than synergy and cooperation with other powers active in the region.<sup>200</sup>

By 2003, even several Russian commentators became increasingly concerned over the growing differences between the U.S. and Russia over the weight of priorities in

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197 Gleason, “Inter-State Cooperation in Central Asia from the CIS to the Shanghai Forum” 1077.

198 Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy,” 285.

199 Ibid., 278. Allison contends the continuing U.S. presence in Central Asia has fostered a renewal of zero-sum think, particularly within the Russian military -security establishment. For several perspectives of how the top military leaders view Russia’s strategic displacement in Central Asia, see: “Russia: Ivashov Recounts Russia’s Geopolitical Losses in 2002,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta in Russian*, 20 January 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030122000462; and Sergeyev Sokut and Vladimir Mukhin, “Military Thought at the Crossroads: The Generals Want Money for the Confrontation with America”, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 20 January 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP2003012000024.

200 Ibid., 285. For an overview of these issues see Lena Jonson, “Russia and Central Asia: post-11 Sept. 2001, *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 19 no. 1 (2003): 89-94.

the global war on terrorism.<sup>201</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov went so as far as to suggest that while U.S. remained in Central Asia, the two countries strategies should be “synchronized.”<sup>202</sup> This call for greater synchronization was reiterated in later comments by CSTO secretary-general Nikolai Bordyuzhas’ call for CSTO-NATO parity in Central Asia.<sup>203</sup>

## **2. Russian Efforts to Reestablish a Forward Security Zone in Central Asia**

The CSTO is the primary example of Russian efforts to re-establish a forward security zone in Central Asia, post-September 11, 2001.<sup>204</sup> The May 2002 decision to create the CSTO by Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was based on the reactivation of long standing plans to create a joint CIS rapid reaction force needed to support “collective security”. By 2003, the framework included a joint command center in Moscow with a rapid reaction force based in Central Asia. The plan also called for a common air defense architecture and a coordination in foreign, security and defense policies.

The CSTO is the latest attempt to enhance Russia’s standing as a reliable “security manager” in Central Asia, but is not without its shortfalls. The main challenge Russia faces while modifying the CSTO in Central Asia is the fact that the core states of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have opted out of any operational plans. Even the Central Asian member states of the CSTO probably doubt Russia’s capacity for effective and impartial military intervention in the region, which places in question possible peacekeeping operations, or even major counter-narcotics activities, under the guise of

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<sup>201</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy,” 278. For representative coverage of this growing discrepancy of interests that stirred the nationalistic-inclined elements of the Russian political and security elites, see: Viktoriya Panfilova, “Serving the State’s Interest or Nostalgia for the Empire?” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian 26 January 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20040126000321; “Putin Going against Mood of Elite. Party Leaders’ Different Assessments of Results of Russian Leader’s Visit to United States”, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 September 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030929000190; Yevgeniy Verlin, “Washington Offered Strategic Alliance. And Told What Specifically Is Required to Secure It,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 29 September 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030929000222; and “America as Russia’s Strategic Ally: An Alliance With the United States Must Be Lined Up on the Basis of Strict Consideration of Russian National Interests,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in Russian, 29 October 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20031029000106.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>204</sup> See Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia’s Central Asia Policy,” 286.

the CSTO. Supporting the various military-security networks are the 201<sup>st</sup> Division with 5,500 military personnel and a large contingent of border guards in Tajikistan. Russia's recent success in facilitating the reconstitution of a forward security zone in Central Asia was the opening of the Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan with 500 personnel and 20 aircraft. This military facility provides Russia with a jumping off point for Russian military and security operations throughout Central Asia.<sup>205</sup>

Russia still dominates this new organization militarily and the CSTO seems to overlap other efforts by the SCO and NATO.<sup>206</sup> The actual extent to which CSTO-NATO parity can be achieved seems limited to counter-narcotics cooperation.<sup>207</sup> There is no evidence supporting a Russian move for NATO-CSTO parity in command structures or actual cooperation in military operations. Despite Nikolai Bordyuzha's calls for coordination on regional security policies, Russia has also attempted to halt the reliance on these other organizations by seeking closer bilateral ties with the Central Asian States.<sup>208</sup> In the Russian lens, these security agenda items indicate the perceived loss of prestige and not an external threat from the American forces operating in Central Asia. Nevertheless, these agenda items continue to demonstrate a paradox in Russian military strategies. For all the talk of regional security, Russia continues to pursue its own intraregional defense and security posture in doctrine and deeds.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> See Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," 286-289.

<sup>206</sup> For broad coverage of CSTO moves for increased cooperation/coordination with NATO and the SCO, see: "CIS Security Group Seeks Closer Ties with Shanghai Organization, NATO," *Moscow ITAR-TASS in English*, 19 November 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20031119000270; "Russia: CIS Collective Security Treaty States to Cooperate With NATO," *Moscow Interfax in English*, 4 November 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20031104000162; "Russia: Countries of Collective Security Treaty Discuss Integration," *Moscow ITAR-TASS in English*, 4 November 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20031104000232; "Collective Security Chief Says No Russian-NATO Standoff in Central Asia," *Moscow Agentstvo Vojennyykh Novostey WWW-Text in English*, 14 November 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20031114000055; and "CIS Security Organization To Cooperate With NATO in Resisting Regional Threats," *Moscow Agentstvo Vojennyykh Novostey WWW-Text in English*, 19 November 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20031119000229.

<sup>207</sup> For more analysis on the outlook for CSTO-NATO cooperation and outlook for a strategic partnership in Central Asia, see Allison, "Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy," 291-293.

<sup>208</sup> For specific tactics employed by Russia to limit NATO's growing influence, see "NATO Secgen Central Asia Trip Seen in Context of Increasing Russian Role in Area," *Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta in Russian*, 29 September 2003, FBIS Document ID: CEP20030930000235.

<sup>209</sup> Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation, *Priority Tasks of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation* (2004). E-mail from Naval Postgraduate School National Security Affairs Department, Monterey California (accessed 31 May 2005).

### **3. The Outlook: Fading Hopes of being a Reliable Security Manager**

Multilateral organizations provide Russia with important mechanisms for pursuing its foreign policy. Since September 11, 2001, Russia has been using the CIS, along with the CSTO and SCO, to promote its role as a Eurasian regional leader in the global fight against terrorism.<sup>210</sup> Russia's resort to multilateral structures in anti-terrorism is becoming a key feature of its national security strategy. This is a novel feature of Russian foreign policy and demonstrates the challenges facing Moscow as it attempts to remain the primary security manager for the Central Asian states.

Moscow's choice of practicing its regional security interests, mostly through CIS structural arrangements and bilateral relations with its former republics, demonstrates the tactical nature of its security arrangements. Specifically, Russia's participation within both the CIS CSTO and SCO RATS, demonstrates the limits of its cooperation as well as the contradictions in its foreign policy.. Medvedev expressed this dualism in Russia's security (circa 2003) as the following:

For all the talk of the war in Kosovo and NATO enlargement, no major security threats are identified on the Western front where Russia is evolving towards a postmodern 'soft security,' economization, acceptance of dominant norms and institution-building process. The true Russian front line is in the East and South where traditional 'hard security' still applies and national interests are defined in modern terms of sovereignty, balance, territorial control, and border defense.<sup>211</sup>

By 2005, regional security cooperation with the U.S. in Central Asia was strained, and disappeared as Moscow sought a closer relationship with Beijing, both bilaterally and multilaterally through the SCO. The Sino-Russian geopolitical counterweight positioning against the U.S. was evident in the 2005 SCO Heads of State communiqué and the Sino-

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<sup>210</sup> For a detailed examination of the geopolitical storylines that developed amongst the Russian political class in the first 6 months after the September 11 attacks, and the attitudes of various socio-demographic groups in Russia to aspects of these storylines, see John O'Loughlin, Gearoid O' Tuathail, and Vladimir Kolossov, "Russian geopolitical storylines and public opinion in the wake of 9-11: a critical geopolitical analysis and national survey," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37, no. 3 (2004): 281–318. For additional analysis of the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> environment see S. Neil Macfarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (May 2004): 447-461; Annette Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (May 2004): 485-502; and Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), esp. ch 7, pp 115-132.

<sup>211</sup> Medvedev, "Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity," 53. .

Russian exercise “Peace Mission 2005”. Russia’s political repositioning and potential change in threat perception by would counter omnibalancing and would indicate that these moves by Russia reflect a balance of threat mentality.

Although Russia participates in the SCO and is interested in maintaining the status quo in Central Asia, one should not conclude that the SCO reflects a “concert” in the Russian lens. Russia still attempts to maintain its last vestiges of a reliable security manager through the military arm of the CIS, the CSTO, and not the SCO’s RATS. Those who champion this position within Russian foreign policy circles talk about CSTO-NATO parity and not SCO-NATO parity. Some might point to the establishment of the SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure Center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan as a sign of the establishment of a concert. However, Russia already has three other regional anti-terrorism centers as part of the CIS framework located in Bishkek, Minsk and Armenia. Additionally, Russia avoided using the SCO RATS as a security or intervention mechanism for maintaining the status quo during the 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan. Russia did not overtly act at all which may indicate two things: that Russia either could not react in a compressed timeframe, or alternatively, Moscow did not see the “Tulip” revolution as a “colored” revolution, but as a regime change with new leaders cut from the mold of the old regime and who they could still do business with. The hardening of an institutional arrangement within the SCO aligns with the neoliberal international regime theory for solving dilemmas of common aversion and preventing particular outcomes (e.g. regime change) than neorealist omnibalancing.

#### **F. SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

Looking at the events of the 1990s, the above analysis clearly demonstrates that the Russian political elites’ debate concerning Russia’s identity shaped Russia’s interests and ultimately changed its foreign policy orientation with respect to the Central Asia and the SCO. Central Asia and the SCO became a bright spot in Russian foreign policy. This is especially true, when comparing Central Asia to other areas of the FSU where Russian attempts at remaining a viable leader through the CIS and other multilateral economic organizations failed to achieve the desired results. The SCO is a prestigious multilateral institution that other countries outside of Central Asia want to join. Russia’s foreign policy was constrained by a lack of economic resources to carry out its role as a

traditional great power. Russia's limited economic sovereignty resulted in a lack of prestige in its former sphere of influence. This prompted Russia to pool its resources to address short-term issues. These factors are associated with its former superpower status and required a remedy. The limitations of Russian foreign policy became increasingly evident in Russian approaches for seeking solutions associated with the crises inside and outside of its former borders. Specifically, when considering how to react to transnational threats, global financial markets or NATO enlargement.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, Russia's actions within the SCO have been modest. Instead, Russia has pursued bilateral sidebar arrangements in economic and security areas. Economically the Kremlin has ensured Russian oil and gas firms' access to Central Asian energy resources to keep up with the Chinese not through the SCO, but bilaterally with the Central Asian states. At the same time, Russia, in an effort to remain a viable security manager and achieve some level of parity with the U.S. and NATO, has pursued security guarantees through the CSTO and individual military arm sales with the Central Asian states.

The fading fears of Russian imperialism in Central Asia have opened the door for new regional enthusiasm for strategic partnerships with Russia. However, in spite of all the rhetoric from Moscow echoing strategic partnerships with Astana, Dushanbe, Bishkek and Tashkent for countering the dangers of extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and separatism, these agreements are poorly named and ineffective.<sup>212</sup> With the exception of the Russian-Tajik partnership, these agreements "are tactical agreements that came into being as a result of a confluence of interests; when the interests change the alliances can be expected to shift."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> For several statements regarding mutual strategic partnerships see, "Tajik President Praises 'Strategic Partnership' with Russia," *RFE/RL Newsline* (17 November 1999), available from *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/1999/11/171199.asp>> (accessed 15 September 2005); "Kyrgyz President terms Russia 'Main Strategic Ally,'" *RFE/RL Newsline*, (3 July 2000) , available from *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2000/07/030700.asp>> (accessed 15 September 2005); "Russian Premier terms Uzbekistan 'Strategic Partner,'" *RFE/RL Newsline* (13 December 1999), available from *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/1999/12/131299.asp>> (accessed 15 September 2005); and "Russian Presidential Aide Visits Uzbekistan," *RFE/RL Newsline* (11 April 2000), available from *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2000/04/110400.asp>> (accessed 15 September 2005).

<sup>213</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Inter-State Cooperation in Central Asia from the CIS to the Shanghai Forum," 1090.

Russia's overall motivations toward the SCO are ambiguous at times. Regional and world events shape the Russian identity, which is the primary variable driving Moscow's interest in Central Asia and the SCO. Russia's inconsistency in its foreign policy toward Central Asia is directly attributed to how Russian political elites reacted to external and internal crises. The dualism of Russian approaches toward the SCO highlight Russia's "schizophrenically split between modernity and postmodernity [sic], national myths and globalization, 'Jihad and McWorld,' security challenges and economic imperatives."<sup>214</sup> The aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 paired with increasing globalization pressures, present new opportunities for greater synchronization and congruence between Russia and the West. This precludes the idea of the SCO being an alliance against the U.S. and NATO. This was evident in the field of security where Russia and the West were converging toward a common understanding of threats, and a similar formulation of national interests circa 2002. Thus, the Russian rationale for the SCO in its early stages of development should not be characterized as a defensive alliance against the U.S. Only later, when Russia created a CSTO rapid reaction force specifically designed for Central Asia—as a counterweight to NATO's anti-terrorism coalition—is there any evidence that Russia changed its perception of threat. However, this was not a balance of threat in a classic Walt's sense (e.g. U.S. offense aggressive intentions against Russia), but a threat of a continuing loss in prestige based on the Russian Eurasianist identity. Critical to this is Russia's choice of seeking an equal partnership with the U.S. and NATO through the CIS CSTO and not the SCO RATS. Others may analyze the events of 2005 in Central Asia and in the status of Sino-Russian bilateral relations to determine if Russia has indeed changed its perception of threat and formed an alliance with China against the U.S.

The Eurasianist policy has led to a paradox for Russia: In its bid to continue playing the role as the principal security manager for Central Asia, Russia finds itself trapped. Russia is brimming with ambitions to play this role, yet it is constrained by serious political, economic and security problems while having to cope with new neighbors and an unprecedented level of activity from other states vying for influence and pursuing their own interests in Central Asia. Eurasianist thinking is flawed because

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<sup>214</sup> Medvedev, "Russia at the End of Modernity: Foreign Policy, Security, Identity," 53.

it is rooted in a selective analysis of Russia's past, which might preclude it from serving as a viable blue print for a twenty-first century Russia foreign policy. However, this does not mean that political elites will avoid using Eurasianism for addressing contemporary issues at any given time or place. Future analysis of Russia's policies toward Central Asia requires a critical understanding of the complexities of Eurasianist thinking, especially for noticing the threads within Russian foreign policy rhetoric and behavior by determining which school of Eurasianism has the political momentum at any given time.

Based on the foregoing analysis, Russia's objectives and interests in Central Asia are interwoven between political, economic and security interests and selective application of Eurasianist thinking. Each has the potential to clash with one another, ultimately making it likely that Russia will face trouble given the complexities of the Central Asia and the SCO member states vying for influence in the region. However, there is little evidence that under Putin's leadership Russia has developed a long-term regional strategy toward Central Asia that would integrate its political, security, energy and economic interests. Thus, “[i]n the absence of such a strategy it has been difficult to promote those interests effectively through the instruments it has available.”<sup>215</sup> The SCO offers Russia the best means to secure its short-term goals while at the same time creating the conditions necessary for the long-term goal of reviving its great power status by maintaining a semi-hegemony over the Central Asian region.

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<sup>215</sup> Allison, “Strategic Reassertion in Russia's Central Asia Policy,” 283.

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## **V. THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE TOWARD THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

What is driving China's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)? In order to understand Chinese motivations behind their participation in the SCO, one must consider the broader factors influencing China's new engagement in Asia in the twenty-first century, as well as its regional relationship with Russia and its former Soviet Central Asian Republics.

During this process of reengagement, several factors have influenced China's identity and current foreign policy outlook. These include regional and international reactions to Tiananmen Square; the 1998 Asian financial crisis; China's reassessment of regional multilateral institutions; the 1999 Kosovo crisis, paired with NATO's eastward expansion; the events of September 11, 2001; and the renewed U.S. strategic interests in Central Asia. These events have shaped the way Beijing views Central Asian regional developments and larger international politics. The SCO's development is a reflection of China's increasingly complex and multifaceted engagement with its neighbors, as well as its reaction to the post-Cold War international system and vision of promoting a multipolar world. The SCO communiq  s contain the tenets of Chinese foreign policy expression, which reflects its large contribution to its leadership within the SCO. Beijing's actions within the SCO framework should be considered as part of an overall long-term strategy supporting its economic security. In this vein, the stability, security and development of the Central Asian states are prerequisites for its overall national security strategy.

This chapter argues that Chinese economic security is the primary motive driving its Central Asian policy and participation in the SCO. This indicates that the Chinese see the SCO more as an international regime and not as a military alliance.<sup>216</sup> Thus, the primary threat to Chinese interests is not U.S. foreign policy or the presence of U.S.

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<sup>216</sup> The Chinese have characterized the good neighborly ties associated with the SCO as the "Shanghai Spirit" supporting a "new regionalism" and maintain that the "Shanghai Spirit" is a partnership and not an alliance. For one example see: Chien-peng Cheng, "The Shanghai Co-operation Organization: China's changing influence in Central Asia," *The China Quarterly* (December 2004) 989-1099.

military bases in Central Asia. The Chinese view the shift in U.S. priorities in Central Asia, from conducting anti-terrorism operations to promoting legitimate democratic reforms as a destabilizing force.<sup>217</sup> Although the Chinese view these perceived changes in U.S. foreign policy as a destabilizing force, it is not considered the primary threat facing SCO member states. Chinese scholars believe that the “Three Evils”<sup>218</sup> will capitalize on American and non-governmental organizations support for promoting democratic reforms in the Central Asian regimes. This works to China’s advantage when promoting their anti-extremist agendas. Domestically, the Chinese view its primary threat from the “Three Evils” as separatism, whether in the Taiwan or the Xinjiang provinces. In Central Asia, the main threat originates in the remnants of the Afghan Taliban regime. Currently, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) has been singled out as the main threat to security, stability and development of Central Asia. The Chinese identify HT as comprising of terrorist and extremists with its support coming from outside Central Asia and originating in the Middle East.<sup>219</sup>

This chapter is organized into four sections. First, this chapter will begin with a review of the international and domestic events that influenced China’s twenty-first century Asian-wide interests and policy choices. The creation of a new regional posture and outlook allowed China to use the SCO to address its short- and long-term security and economic interests, as well as support its strategic objectives. Second, this chapter will examine Chinese strategic incentives for fostering improved relations with Russia and the Central Asian states. Third, it will consider China’s economic agenda in Central Asia, as well as its economic priorities in its relationship with Russia and the Central Asian republics. Finally, this chapter will explore how China perceives traditional and non-traditional threats in its policies toward Central Asia.

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<sup>217</sup> Chinese perceptions of this change in U.S. foreign policy priorities has been picked up and played upon by Uzbekistan.

<sup>218</sup> Recently Chinese scholars have softened the tone of the “Three Evils” and begun referring to international terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism as the “Three Forces”.

<sup>219</sup> An anonymous scholar during an off the record interview, Summer 2005.

## B. CHINESE IDENTITY DRIVEN INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

During the 1990s, five events shaped Chinese perceptions of its regional position and the international environment. These events had a cumulative effect and laid the groundwork for China's new engagement in Asia and surrounding regions in the twenty-first century. Unlike the Russian case, the Chinese identity was not greatly impacted by events in Central Asia. Instead, Asia-Pacific events weighted more heavily, along with international events which shaped the Russian identity. These events cannot be directly tied to changes in Chinese foreign policy behavior in Central Asia, but are a general lattice from which Beijing was able to use to expand its bilateral and multilateral ties in crafting a new regional approach toward Central Asia.

The first event shaping China's policy was the reaction of the Asian states to the killing of civilians on June 4, 1989 by the Chinese military. International reaction was extremely harsh, but regionally China observed some unexpected results. While Japan condemned the use of force and South Korea expressed the incident as regrettable, the "Southeast Asian states remained silent or, as in the Thai and Malaysian cases, noted simply that it was an 'internal affair'."<sup>220</sup> According to David Shambaugh, "ASEAN's desire to engage China at this critical time left an impression on the leadership in Beijing. While the rest of the world was doing its best to isolate China, ASEAN chose to reach out to Beijing."<sup>221</sup>

Outside of Asia, China found itself isolated from the rest of the world following the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, the end of the Cold War and the ensuing collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This isolation restricted China's "omnidirectional" foreign affairs policies. Only rapid economic growth in the 1990s provided China with an opportunity to exert more influence in the post-Cold War international environment. China successfully completed several major agreements with the U.S., Russia, the EU and Japan, thereby shifting "the focus of its omnidirectional diplomacy to a strategic relationship with the major powers."<sup>222</sup> In 1996, China signed a "strategic cooperation

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<sup>220</sup> David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security* 29, no. 3 (Winter 2004/05): 67.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>222</sup> Tomoyuki Kojima, "China's 'Omnidirectional Diplomacy:' Cooperation with All, Emphasis on Major Powers," *Asia-Pacific Review* 8, no. 2 (November 2001): 82.

partnership” with Russia,<sup>223</sup> followed by a 1997 “constructive strategic partnership” with the U.S. Furthermore, in 1998 China established a “full-scale partnership” with the EU, and an “amicable and cooperative partnership for peace and development in the Asian region” with Japan. Chinese economic growth, despite its international isolation, was a key factor that permitted China to run its domestic affairs as it saw fit. The industrialized countries needed China’s participation in the global economy, which provided China with the flexibility in its foreign policy to seek relations on the best terms possible for China.

The second event shaping China’s policy was the 1998 Asian financial crisis. Despite fears of a spillover of the crisis into China, Chinese leaders were able to prevent the spread of the “Asian Flu” to China’s vulnerable banking sector. The Chinese financial system was able to navigate through this turmoil primarily because it already had currency controls in places where they were lacking in the ASEAN countries. “[I]ts currency was not convertible on capital accounts, and Beijing possessed a large reservoir of foreign exchange reserves—all of which helped to buffer the Chinese economy.”<sup>224</sup> The Chinese leadership pursued a path of not devaluating the currency while offering modest, favorable loans to the Southeast Asian states, which was in contrast to the advice of the International Monetary Fund and other international creditors. Chinese “assistance punctured the prevailing image of China in the region as either aloof or hegemonic and began to replace it with an image of China as a responsible power.”<sup>225</sup> Shambaugh contends the merits of China’s “actions [also] boosted the confidence of China’s leaders in their role as regional actors.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> See: “Text of Sino-Russian Joint Communiqué Issued,” *Beijing XINHUA Domestic Service* in Chinese, 28 December 1996, FBIS Document ID: FTS19961228000070; “Li Peng Affirms Respect for Russia’s Foreign Policy,” *Beijing XINHUA* in English, 27 December 1996, FBIS Document ID: FTS19961227000109; and Xiong Changyi, Zhu Chengjun, and Zhang Tiegang, “Li Peng-Chernomyrdin Talks Examined,” *Beijing XINHUA Domestic Service* in Chinese, 27 December 1996, FBIS Document ID: FTS19961227000118

<sup>224</sup> Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” 68.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

The third catalyst to China's new regional policy was a complete reassessment of regional multilateral institutions. This was not driven by a single event, but was reflected as more of a gradual process between 1997 and 2001.<sup>227</sup> During this timeframe, "the Chinese government significantly modified its assessment of regional, and particularly security-related, multilateral organizations."<sup>228</sup> Prior to the mid-1990s, the Chinese elite had "viewed such organizations as potential tools of the United States that could be used to contain it."<sup>229</sup> In time, Chinese perceptions toward these organizations gradually "evolved from suspicion, to uncertainty, to supportiveness."<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, Chinese officials soon found that the cooperative security approaches associated with these regional organizations matched its own new security concept (NSC) and were an area for further dialog and interaction. Specifically, the NSC is aimed at adjusting the international order away from Cold War legacy thinking and approaches.<sup>231</sup> Chinese President Jiang Zemin codified the NSC at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in March 1999 as:

The core of such a new concept of security should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful co- existence and other universally recognized norms governing international relations make up the political foundation underpinning world peace. Mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity constitutes the economic guarantee for world peace. Dialogues, consultations and negotiations by parties concerned on an equal footing are the correct approach to resolving disputes and safeguarding peace. The establishment of a new concept of security and a new just and fair

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<sup>227</sup> The period of 1997 to 2001 also saw the emergence of the Shanghai Five (later the SCO) as another regional forum which the Chinese fully supported in conjunction with its 1990's rapprochement with Russia.

<sup>228</sup> Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," 68-9.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. Other scholars reflect the evolving Chinese thinking concerning multilateral organizations. See Alastair Iain Johnston and Paul Evans, "China's Engagement with Multilateral Security Institutions," in, *Engaging China*, eds. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (New York: Rutledge, 1999), 235-272; and Jing-dong Yuan, "Regional Institutions and Cooperative Security: Chinese Approaches and Policies," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn 2001): 263-294.

<sup>231</sup> Shambaugh contends that the NSC is nothing new but in fact a repackaged version of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (e.g. mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence).

international order is the only way to fundamentally promote a healthy development of the disarmament process and provide the guarantee for international peace and security.<sup>232</sup>

Unfortunately, within days of this speech the Chinese NSC was to face additional challenges, because during the same month NATO started Operation Allied Force.

A fourth aspect to China's new regional approach was the reaction of the Asian states to China's call for the elimination of Cold War alliances. Previously, while Chinese officials were traveling through Asia in 1997 had called for the abrogation of all international alliances, whether bilateral or multilateral.<sup>233</sup> Beijing offered its NSC as an alternative to Cold War international relations. However, these Chinese calls had an unintended reaction from its Asian neighbors and were ignored internationally. "In fact, a number of Asian governments privately but sternly told Beijing that such calls were unwelcome and that they had no intention of severing their alliances with the United States."<sup>234</sup> This counter reaction caught Chinese officials off guard, as they had miscalculated "other countries assertiveness in defending their security ties with the United States. Within a year Beijing had cooled its public rhetoric on the issue."<sup>235</sup>

The final aspect shaping Chinese regional engagements was the reaffirmation of Deng Xiaoping's peace and development thesis. Central to Deng's 1985 dictum was the rejection of the inevitability of another world war due to the inherent instability of the international order. Instead he proposed "that China's guiding principle, both internationally and domestically, should continue to be 'peace and development' ... to

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<sup>232</sup> "Jiang Zemin Calls for Cultivation of New Security Concept," *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 26 March 1999, FBIS Document ID: FTS19990326001680.

<sup>233</sup> For examples, see: Yan Xuetong "China's New Security Concept and Its Idea on Security Cooperation," *Beijing Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations] in Chinese, 20 November 1997, No 11 pp 28-32, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980519000486; Han Hua, "Chinese Diplomacy in 1997:Increased Vitality and Opportunities," *Hong Kong Wen Wei Po* in Chinese, 9 September 1997 p A5, FBIS Document ID: FTS19970909001658; Ai Hung-jen, "Jiang Zemin Issues 10 Major Principles -- Full Preparations for Sino-US Talks: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Implements Jiang Zemin's 10 Major Principles for All-Round Foreign Relations," *Hong Kong Kuang Chiao Ching* no. 301, (16 October 1997), pp 18-22 in Chinese, 24 October 1997, FBIS Document ID: FTS19971024000662.

<sup>234</sup> Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," 70.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

pursue economic development, China needed a peaceful environment.”<sup>236</sup> The 1999 U.S.-led NATO Operation Allied Force and accidental targeting of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade challenged Chinese belief in Deng’s “peace and development” theory. U.S. willingness to use force with its vastly superior technology and weapon systems challenged another one of Deng premise, “that the leading hegemon, the United States, had entered a period of gradual decline. Yet by 1999, in the eyes of many Chinese analysts, neither Deng’s core thesis nor the corollary appeared to be valid.”<sup>237</sup> The Chinese elite grasping of this unwelcome “realization spurred an intense domestic debate about the validity of the peace and development concept.”<sup>238</sup>

After the aerial bombing campaign ended, the Chinese elite began to reassess Deng’s thesis. Following several months of intensive discussions, a consensus emerged within the Chinese leadership. Chinese leaders believed that Deng’s general thesis was still accurate as an overall assessment of and guide to China’s foreign policy, “despite some notable ‘global contradictions’ (a code word for conflicts) and the fact that the United States did not appear to be in decline (just the opposite).”<sup>239</sup> However, Chinese international affairs experts concluded that for a peaceful environment conducive to domestic development to emerge, China needed to be less passive and more proactive in

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<sup>236</sup> Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” 71. For broad coverage, see: Jen Hui-wen, “Jiang Zemin Stresses Developing ‘Deng Theory’ Amidst Pioneering,” *Hong Kong Hs (Hong Kong Economic Journal)* in Pao, 17 January 1997, FBIS Document ID: FTS19970117001071; Zeng Peiyan, “Seriously Study Deng Xiaoping Economic Theory,” *Beijing Jingji Ribao* in Chinese, 20 January 1997, FBIS Document ID: FTS19970302000515; He Jia zheng and Wang Yanbin, “Zhu Rongji on Studying Deng Xiaoping Economic Theory,” *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* in Chinese, 18 February 1997, FBIS Document ID: FTS19970218000103; Li Lianzhong, “The Deng Xiaoping Economic Theory Is the Marxist Political Economics of Contemporary China,” *Beijing Jingji Ribao* in Chinese, 7 April 1997, FBIS Document ID: FTS19970508000675; Zeng Peiyan, “Handle Affairs in Economic Work According to the Laws of Economics,” *Beijing Renm* in Ribao, 5 August 1997, p 9, FBIS Document ID: FTS19970928000690; Chen Yan, Chen Weiping, and Huang Zhongping, “Rally Under the Great Banner -- On the First Anniversary of Comrade Deng Xiaoping’s Passing,” *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* in Chinese, 16 February 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980217000082; “Continue Carrying Out the Policy of Stability and Progress,” *Beijing Qiushi* in Chinese, 1 March 1998, no. 5 pp 33-34, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980416000857; and Pamela Pun and Fong Tak-ho, “Deng Xiaoping Economic, Political Legacy Still Debated,” *Hong Kong Hongkong Standard* in English, 19 February 1999, p5, FBIS Document ID: FTS19990219000037.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 71. For an analysis of this debate, see David Finkelstein, *China Reconsiders Its National Security: The Great Peace and Development Debate of 1999* (Alexandria, Va.: CNA Corporation, 2000). Also see Chi Haotian, “Carry Forward Chinese Soul to Greet the New Century -- Thought on Learning Comrade Jiang Zemin’s Important Exposition on the ‘Three Stresses’,” *Beijing Renm* in Ribao 15 June 1999, p 3, FBIS Document ID: FTS19990621000414.

shaping its regional milieu. This debate ended just after the 2000 U.S. presidential election.<sup>240</sup> During the 2000 U.S. presidential election ballot recount, the Chinese elite met for a three-week conclave to examine every aspect of U.S.-Sino relations. “Chinese officials and analysts judged that there had been far too much volatility in the relationship over the previous decade, that this turbulence was not conducive to Chinese interests and goals.”<sup>241</sup> The comprehensive review “concluded that China needed to stabilize and improve its relationship with the U.S., as the single most important country for China’s national interests.”<sup>242</sup>

The social constructivist approach fails to offer a compelling case that these events forced a substantial Chinese identity shift based on the evidence presented. Rather, these five events, paired with Chinese responses to them, demonstrate learning in Chinese foreign policy decision-making. While they do not directly pertain to Central Asia as a source, they do represent a new calculus from which China can act both regionally and internationally as a rising power. Multilateral institutions and approaches are now a staple of Chinese foreign policy. Bilateral relations can be furthered under such umbrellas. Neither seems more important than the other, but in Central Asia and the SCO, China has been more effective in pursuing its interests through bilateral sidebar meetings at SCO meetings. This was evident throughout 2003 when the SCO was still in its infancy as an intergovernmental organization. After 2004, Beijing was more comfortable operating independently in Central Asia, with fewer constraints placed on its strategic incentives, economic agenda and security interests by Moscow.

Geopolitical and geoeconomic factors may offer a more compelling case and reach different conclusions for what is the primary motivation behind China’s specific interest in this one regional-level organization. To consider this conundrum this chapter will now consider if China views the SCO primarily as an alliance, a “concert” or an

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<sup>240</sup> Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” 71.

<sup>241</sup> David Shambaugh, “New Stability in U.S.-China Relations: Causes and Consequences,” in Jonathan D. Pollack, ed., *Strategic Surprise? U.S.-China Relations in the Early Twenty-First Century* (Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College, 2004), 25.

<sup>242</sup> Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” 71.

economic regime by considering its strategic incentives, economic agenda and security interests in Central Asia. The next three sections will examine how China pursued these foreign policy goals.

### C. CHINESE STRATEGIC INCENTIVES IN CENTRAL ASIA

This section will focus specifically on China's policies toward Central Asia and the use of the SCO framework to achieve its strategic interests. If there is overwhelming evidence that China's geopolitical interests are driving its participation in the SCO, then one might consider the SCO a defense alliance with the Russians based on a perceived threat from U.S. hegemony and aggressive foreign policy.<sup>243</sup> Prior to the establishment of the Shanghai "Five", the post-Soviet Sino-Russian partnership was largely defined in terms of political-security agreements.<sup>244</sup> Both parties recognized that the lagging economic relationship needed to be brought in line with the political-security dimension of their strategic partnership.<sup>245</sup> China also recognized that with the independence of the Central Asian republics, its geopolitical relations with Russia would be concentrated in the Northeast instead of the Northwest.<sup>246</sup> In considering its Sino-Central Asian relations, China has been mindful of the "Russia factor" due to the historically close interdependence between the Central Asian states and other CIS members, especially Russia. As the Central Asian republics transition from the Soviet era, they have looked for partners outside of the CIS framework. The SCO provides a mechanism to meet this need while not disrupting the Central Asian states historical ties with Russia.

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<sup>243</sup> The likely impact of a "rising China" on the international system has been by many other scholarly endeavors so it will not be presented here. For one such work, see: Wayne Bert, "Perspectives on the Chinese Challenge to the International Order," Columbia International Affairs Online <<http://www.ciaonet.org/isa/bew01/index.html>> (accessed 16 May 2005).

<sup>244</sup> For coverage of key Sino-Russian political-security arrangements, see "Major Sino-Russian Documents Signed Since 1992 Listed," *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 22 April 1996, FBIS Document ID: FTS19960422000137

<sup>245</sup> For an analysis of why Sino-Russian economic relations were lagging prior to 1998 and short/long-term trading trends coming out of this period , see: David Kerr, 'Problems in Sino-Russian Economic Relations,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 50 no. 7 (November 1998): 1133-1156.

<sup>246</sup> For the implications of this change see Guangcheng Xing, "China and Central Asia: Towards a New Relationship," in *Ethnic Challenges beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perceptions of the Central Asian Conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian (London: Macmillan, 1998), 41-45. Also see Li Zhiye, "On Issues Regarding Regional Cooperation in Northeast Asia," *Beijing Xiandai Guoji Guanxi [Contemporary International Relations]* No 11 in Chinese, 20 November 1997, pp 23-27, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980512000371.

## **1. China and the Strategic Scene in Central Asia pre 9/11**

China recognized that the Central Asian states were subject to adverse influences from external powers during their transition from the Soviet era. In the past, China regarded Russia as the main security manager for maintaining the stability of the Central Asia states and the surrounding areas.<sup>247</sup> The Chinese and Russians share similar strategic approaches to maintaining regional stability and development while also interested in preventing other great and regional powers from gaining influence in the region. However, they differ on the level of independence. Russia had traditionally viewed Central Asia in their sphere of influence and sought to limit Chinese influence. China opposed this Russian conception and supported the Central Asian states' independence and their ability to cooperate with all other countries.<sup>248</sup>

Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, China was paranoid of the U.S. presence in Central Asia. The Chinese viewed NATO's eastward expansion, which included the Central Asian states joining NATO's PfP program, with the accompanying joint exercises, as an U.S. attempt of containing China by threatening its security in the Northern and Western regions.<sup>249</sup> While China did not explicitly express opposition to the Central Asia states participating in PfP, it nevertheless closely watched how NATO influenced the newly independent republics. The latent evidence suggests that China was opposed to any U.S. scheme of building up its military presence, conducting exercises or using the Central Asian states as a tool for containing China. The Chinese believed that part of the aim of U.S. foreign policy and military cooperation in Central Asia was to threaten China's security and to contain China's strategic plans in Xinjiang; the other part of U.S. foreign policy being to contain Russia and weaken its influence in Central Asia.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> The Chinese recognize that most the Central Asian states military and security personnel and equipment date from the Soviet period which was evident during the 1990s as they continually relied on Russian direct assistance and military intervention for protecting their external borders and aiding in internal crises.

<sup>248</sup> Guangcheng Xing. "China and China Asia," in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, ed. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), 166.

<sup>249</sup> Tajikistan is not a member in NATO's PfP due to its strong ties to the Russian military in the aftermath and peace settlement of its Civil War.

<sup>250</sup> Xing. "China and China Asia," 166-167.

Shireen T. Hunter suggested that Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng's April 1994 trip to Central Asia was the catalyst for China's advance into the region.<sup>251</sup> The *raison d'être* for the trip was "to reduce the hostility, the perceived threat from China in the region."<sup>252</sup> China was also increasingly concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism and the specter of Uighur nationalism and its impact on overall regional stability.<sup>253</sup> In addition, China saw an opportunity to push for a revival of the Silk Road.

The broad outlines of Chinese foreign policies in Central Asia, evolving from the 1994 trip, seem to be straightforward.<sup>254</sup> "China has expanded its ties across Central Asia to stabilize its western frontier, gain access to the region's energy resources, and balance Western influence in an area Beijing has traditionally viewed as Russia's reserve."<sup>255</sup> By establishing closer ties with the Central Asian states, Robert Sutter suggests that Beijing may be better suited than Russia to address the threats stemming from "the linkage of religion and politics," thus shielding the "Xinjiang Province and its ethnically Turkic population from outside Muslim and pan-Turkic influence."<sup>256</sup> However, Beijing still expressed some reservations about the Central Asian states' resolve for eradicating the threat.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia since Independence*, (New York: Praeger, 1996), 126. Shireen T. Hunter is a visiting senior research fellow at the Center for European Policy Studies-Brussels.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. Cited from Steven Levine, "Li Peng Tip-Toes along the Old Silk Route," *Financial Times*, 29 April 1994.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> For an analysis on the general outline of Sino-Central Asia relations drawn from the Chinese Five principles of peaceful coexistence, see Xing, "China and Central Asia: Towards a New Relationship," 31-49.

<sup>255</sup> Robert Sutter, *Chinese Policy Priorities and the Implications for the United States*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 142.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. These fears may have been initially over hyped. China has sought a strengthening of ties with Turkey, while at the same time downplaying the treatment of the Turkic Uighurs in Xinjiang. For details, see: "Ecevit Comments on Demonstrations in Xinjiang Providence," *Ankara TRT Television*, 1 June 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980602000158; and "Turkey Willing to Expand Ties with China," *Xinhua*, 29 May 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980529001533.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. For additional coverage of China's progress and cooperation within Central Asia during the 1990s, see: Lillian Craig Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," *China Quarterly* no. 133 (March 1993): 111-129; "China's Muslim rebels," *The Economist*, London, 13 July 1996 vol 340, no. 7974: 33; Li Peng, "China's Basic Policy toward Central Asia," *Beijing Review* 39 no. 30 (22-28 July 1996): 8-9; and Ross Munro, "Central Asia and China," in *Central Asia and the World*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994): 225-238.

## **2. Chinese Strategic Incentives in Central Asia post-9/11**

Some analysts, reviewing China's moves within the SCO, suggest that one should consider the strategic dimension of its policy decisions. Under these assumptions, China's role in the new "Great Game" is characterized in three dimensions: first, as a counterweight to U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia; second, by gaining access to the energy resources and other strategic minerals in Central Asia; and third, by exploiting the fragile political situation in the Xinjiang province. Indeed:

China attaches importance to the elimination of bilateral irritants and to the consolidation of its economic relations with the countries on its western border. Closer relations with the Central Asian countries through the Shanghai grouping also ensure non-interference by them in Xinjiang, which shares ethnic and religious affinities with them.<sup>258</sup>

Other factors may also weigh in the rise of China's interest in Central Asia. The renewed U.S. engagement, post-September 11, 2001 may have involuntarily assisted the expansion of China's position in Central Asia. In Omurbek Tekebaev's view:

When the U.S. strengthened its position, China began to also show that it was interested in Central Asia. So, recently, the Chinese leadership told a meeting [of regional leaders] in Tashkent that it will invest about [\$]4,000 million dollars in the Central Asian countries. For example, Chinese leaders spoke openly about their intention to pay the full cost of about \$1.5 billion for the construction of a highway from China to Central Asia, via Kyrgyzstan.<sup>259</sup>

In addition, Niklas Swanstrom, Executive Director of the Program for Contemporary Silk Road Studies at Sweden's Uppsala University points to Russia' continued tenuous grip over the region as a reason why outside powers have gained increased influence in Central Asia. However, he argues that the Chinese have outpaced U.S. and European

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<sup>258</sup> Maqbool Ahmad Bhatty: "Role of the Shanghai-5," *Karachi Dawn* (Internet version-WWW), 16 June 2000, FBIS Document ID: SAP20000716000029. This critical assessment by Dr Bhatty is important because Pakistan while a close ally with China vis -à-vis India, does want to manage its imagine also with respect to Russia and the U.S. Any perceived hostile propaganda generated from the SCO can impact Pakistan's image both regionally and international especially in light of the ISI former support for the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Only by taking effective counter-measures can Pakistan protect its image as well as interests in Central Asia which is a vital concern to its national security.

<sup>259</sup> Omurbek Tekebaev is the leader of Kyrgyzstan's opposition Atameken (Motherland) Socialist Party (circa November 2004) cited in Jeremy Bransten, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 1 - An Overview," (18 November 2004) *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 15 January 2005).

efforts because of their more effective policies, which entail comprehensive regional economic and security investments. These Chinese policies are also more appealing to the Central Asian states because of the lack of political strings which are attached to the U.S. and Russia aid offers.<sup>260</sup>

### **3. The Outlook: Does China view the SCO as a Defensive Alliance?**

Walt's explanation for how states' calculate threat and make alignment choices is based on aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability and offensive intentions; offensive intentions being the key variable. Throughout the Cold War, the U.S. had an aggregate power advantage over China. Additionally, the U.S. demonstrated its offensive capabilities throughout the 1990s culminating in the Air War over Yugoslavia. The U.S. military presence in Central Asia after September 11, 2001, added proximity to Chinese perceptions of threat from the U.S. Finally, China viewed a perceived U.S. containment strategy as a looming threat and as its offensive intention against China. Nevertheless, do these four variables of balance of threat mean that China intends to use the SCO as a defensive alliance against the U.S.?

The Chinese have already used the SCO to promote its strategic incentives and foreign policy interests in Central Asia. China's influence is evident in the language used for SCO joint declarations, especially as a means for voicing opposition to U.S. foreign policy. So far, the SCO has come out in opposition to America's decision to scrap the ABM, as well as the U.S. NMD initiative. SCO declarations have also committed the regional group to a "One China" policy and support for China's claims to Taiwan. These examples are evidence of the SCO becoming a multilateral platform for prompting Chinese national interests. Indeed this behavior may be latently anti-American in nature, but from China's standpoint, the SCO should not be classified as a defensive alliance. Instead, there is evidence of a prestige factor associated with how the Chinese political elite think about the SCO.

The SCO is a prestigious intergovernmental organization, which happens to support the broad spectrum of Chinese national security interests. China is rapidly emerging as a world power. In a decade or two, it might directly challenge the supremacy

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<sup>260</sup> Niklas Swanstrom, cited in Jeremy Bransten, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview."

of the United States, Japan and Europe. But before this can happen, Beijing's leaders will need to help stabilize the region, while creating good neighborly ties with the countries surrounding China's borders. In the future, this could ultimately give China political support, as well as economic leverage. This objective has led Beijing to set up trade missions in every Central Asian country, invest in local enterprises, donate money to aid projects and give special attention to a high profile to new bodies, such as the SCO. Beijing views Central Asia as a bright spot in its foreign policy and China is eager to highlight the positive impact of the SCO. The successes and recognition of the SCO has increased Chinese prestige both regionally and internationally, which China has cashed in on for furthering its foreign policy agenda and meeting its strategic incentives.

China's plans for the future of the SCO can be seen from remarks made at the August 2004 seminar entitled "SCO: New Model for Regional Cooperation."<sup>261</sup> The SCO's Chinese Secretary-General, Zhang Deguang, commented on the SCO's role as a new model for regional cooperation. Deguang's remarks focused on the existing cooperation in the political and economic arenas, as well as other areas such as science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation and environmental protection in preparation for the SCO governmental heads' meeting in September 2004.<sup>262</sup>

General Xiong Guangkai, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and president of the China International Strategy Society, provided comments on the future of the SCO as well. General Guangkai's speech entitled "Develop the 'Shanghai Spirit,' Promote Peaceful Development," focused on the developmental perspectives for the SCO. Highlighted were the implications for political, economic and trade, security and humanitarian concerns.<sup>263</sup> China recognizes that the SCO is at a critical juncture and the near term steps for focusing and expanding its mission and organization will determine the road map for the next several decades. The initial establishment of good neighborly ties had brought about a wide-range of consensus

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<sup>261</sup> The China Institute for International Strategic Studies and Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany sponsored this seminar.

<sup>262</sup> Du Yan and Qi Bin, "Xiong Guangkai Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Has Bright Future," *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwen She* in Chinese, 17 August 2004, FBIS Document ID: CPP20040817000197.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

among SCO members. The SCO's solid institutional foundation ensures its healthy development and is a springboard for the SCO having "a broad and bright future."<sup>264</sup> The PLA Chief of Staff further posited that the SCO "will have a positive impact on further safeguarding world peace and promoting the process of international political democratization."<sup>265</sup> China is also solidifying its position within the international community by promoting the SCO as a new model for post-Cold War multilateralism.

Geopolitical undertones are rampant in the Chinese articulations of what the SCO is about and its potential. Nevertheless, the economic and regional security variables have been the items stressed by the Chinese political elite. The next two sections will consider how these variables might provide a better explanation of Chinese interests in Central Asia, and thus, their view of the SCO and its purpose.

#### **D. CHINESE ECONOMIC AGENDA IN CENTRAL ASIA**

The SCO provides China with a mechanism to solidify its relationships with Russia and the Central Asian states. China's leadership has put a face on the SCO as an organization that is committed to fighting and rooting out the "Three Evils" of international terrorism, extremism and separatism, as well as drug trafficking and international crime. But there is little evidence that would support the SCO member states foregoing security interests in the SCO and instead focusing on creating an economic institution. China has its own agenda for the future of the SCO and Central Asia. China's economic security concerns are shaping its foreign policy, which in turn directly influences the direction and role of the SCO. China's first mechanism of choice is to use their economic instrument of power to facilitate its macro and domestic security concerns. However, one must bear in mind how China's economic agenda within the SCO also supports its strategic incentives by curtailing the growing U.S. presence and influence in Central Asia.

Chinese scholars cite four reasons why increased trade and energy cooperation makes sense for China and the Central Asian state's national interests and for the international energy market. First, both China and the Central Asian countries are

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<sup>264</sup> Yan and Bin, "Xiong Guangkai Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Has Bright Future,", FBIS Document ID: CPP20040817000197.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

undergoing a period of economic transition and their ambitious goals require them to interact in the global marketplace. Second, geographic factors are conducive for economic trade and development between them. Third, their economic structures are complementary. Finally, by developing other energy transport infrastructures, they can offer a “second Eurasian bridge” and pipelines to bring the oil wealth of Central Asia to those that require it.<sup>266</sup> While quaint in presentation, the last two items should be left open for interpretation. The Chinese and Central Asian economic structures are far from complementary and demonstrate wishful thinking on the part of the Chinese. The Central Asian states remain attached to the Soviet-legacy economic system and infrastructure. This is part of the reason why some Chinese firms find it hard to do business in Central Asia when the barter system remains a staple of daily local business commerce and cross-border trading. Additionally, a “second Eurasian bridge” seems far from how Russia coins the term. Russia under its Eurasianist orientation seeks to be a bridge between the East and West. One should question if Chinese sincerely advocate a similar approach to the Russians or if they plan to have as much of the Central Asian hydrocarbons running downhill directly in Xinjiang and the rest of China. The 2005 move by the SCO, expanding its membership to include Iran, India and Pakistan as observers, creates new possibilities to build other energy pipelines that can potentially crisscross the expanse of Eurasia.

### **1. Separatism and Economic Development in Xinjiang: The Door to Central Asia**

Islamism and Separatism in Central Asia and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in China’s Northwest posses a threat to Chinese domestic security, but the Xinjiang province also has military and economic value to the Chinese.<sup>267</sup> Militarily, China’s nuclear testing site, Lop Nor, lies in the Taklamakan desert. Economically, the

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<sup>266</sup> Xing. “China and China Asia,” 156.

<sup>267</sup> For detail analysis of how turmoil in Xinjiang effects Chinese planned energy projects in Central Asia, see: Peter Ferdinand, “The New Central Asia and China,” in *The New States of Central Asia and their Neighbors*, ed. Peter Ferdinand (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994): 95-107.

Tarim Basin contains large deposits of oil, natural gas and minerals. The Xinjiang province “is also important as a potential pipeline conduit for crude oil from Kazakhstan.”<sup>268</sup>

Guangcheng Xing, the Deputy Director of the Institute of East European, Russian and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, contends “[e]conomic development is a central component of China’s approach to fighting separatism and maintaining long-term stability in Xinjiang.”<sup>269</sup> During the Cold War, China’s strategy regarding its Northwest was one of defense. However, the independence of the former Soviet republics offered new opportunities. Throughout the 1990s, the XUAR regional government initiated several policies promoting the region’s economic development and expanding foreign trade expansion; including building joint trade centers with foreign partners thereby attracting foreign businesses to further tie local firms to outside companies. Building Xinjiang’s infrastructure and establishing a favorable business climate has allowed XUAR to become the main corridor for trade with the independent Central Asian states. This is major strategic adjustment in Chinese domestic and foreign policies regarding Xinjiang. Shifting from a defense orientation toward an economic development door into Central Asia marked “an important change in the attitude of [the] Chinese Communist party and the Government.”<sup>270</sup>

Xinjiang is also important to China’s future energy security. According to the official China Daily, the Xinjiang region is set to replace China’s Daqing oilfield in its Northeast as the primary source for the production of Chinese domestic energy requirements. Currently Xinjiang is China’s third largest oil producing region, holding 30 percent of Chinese oil reserves and 34 percent of its natural gas reserves. Chinese officials expected oil production in Xinjiang to double from 22 million tons produced in 2004 to 50 million tons in the near future. Domestic production in Xinjiang, matched

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<sup>268</sup> Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 101.

<sup>269</sup> Xing. “China and China Asia,” 164.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 165.

with imports from Central Asia, is expected to increase to over 100 million tons annually, which is the equivalent of nearly 60 percent of China's total domestic production from 2004.<sup>271</sup>

## **2. Economic and Energy Relations**

The break-up of the Soviet Union provided China with new opportunities and challenges in reestablishing its historical “silk road” economic and cultural ties with Central Asia.<sup>272</sup> Through SCO and bilateral arrangements, China can offer the Central Asian states lessons drawn from China’s own transition toward a market economy; further ensuring the likelihood of greater successes and prospects of common economic prosperity in reviving the new “silk road” economy.<sup>273</sup> China recognizes the economic potential of the Central Asian Republics’ oil and gas reserves to the world economy. The SCO offers China key tie-ins to Central Asia. China needs to develop its customer goods, but more importantly it needs to secure its access to the Central Asian energy resource sector.

In 1993 China became a net importer of oil and increasingly reliant on energy imports. By 2003, China surpassed Japan as the world’s second-largest petroleum consumer behind the U.S., with an estimated 5.56 million barrels consumed per day. China’s 2003 oil production was only 3.54 million barrels per day, which required net oil imports of 2.02 million barrels per day (bbl/d). According to the U.S. Department of Energy, China is estimated to have 18.3 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Chinese oil

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<sup>271</sup> “China’s Xinjiang province comes of age; The narrowing U.S.-China military gap,” *China Reform Monitor* no. 592 (30 June 2005). Available from American Foreign Policy Council <<http://www.afpc.org/>> (accessed 10 September 2005).

<sup>272</sup> For early attempts by China to promote regional economic development in Central Asia and prospects for success in the twenty-first century, see: Qingjian Liu, “Sino-Central Asian Trade and Economic Relations: Progress, Problems, and Prospects,” in *Ethnic Challenges beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perceptions of the Central Asian Conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian (London: Macmillian, 1998), 166-178. Qingjian Liu is a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of Eastern European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

<sup>273</sup> For a detailed analysis, see: Zhuangzhi Sun, “Central Asia’s Transition to a Market Economy: An Analytical Comparison with China,” in *Ethnic Challenges beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perceptions of the Central Asian Conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian (London: Macmillian, 1998), 147-165. Zhuangzhi Sun is a Research Fellow of the Institute of Eastern European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

demand is projected to reach 12.8 million bbl/d by 2025; with net imports quadrupling to over 9.4 million bbl/d.<sup>274</sup> The rising demand for oil has led China to consider all resources of oil throughout Southeast Asia and Central Asia.

During the 1990s, Chinese diplomatic officials and business leaders were crisscrossing Central Asia, signing bilateral cooperation agreements and business contracts aimed at expanding Beijing's regional footprint. Trade and energy cooperation between China and Central Asia largely came about after Li Peng's trip to Kazakhstan in 1994. While the Chinese economy is flourishing, its domestic oil and mining industries have not been able to keep pace with the demands of its growing economy. Chinese interests in Central Asia are largely driven by its need for energy resources. Nineteen ninety-eight marked an important year for establishing a new energy relationship with Kazakhstan. China National Petroleum Cooperation (CNPC) secured the rights to own and operate the Uzen oilfield in western Kazakhstan. Additionally, China also contracted to open up the Zhanazhol, Kenjiyake and Wujing oil fields in Aktyubinsk near the Kazakh border with Russia.<sup>275</sup>

The SCO has opened up new opportunities for China to pursue oil deals with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Robert Ebel, Director of the energy and national security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, argues, "China's involvement in Central Asia is prompted both by higher demand and its need to reduce the risk of relying on the Middle East."<sup>276</sup> However, not all has gone according to plan. China's "go West" policy has renewed the drive behind Chinese state companies' revival of energy investment projects throughout Central Asia. Specifically, Beijing has sought a revival in energy cooperation with Kazakhstan, which had "languished since 1997, when CNPC promised to invest \$9.5 billion in pipelines and oil fields thousands of kilometers from home."<sup>277</sup> Russia derailed this effort by suggesting a

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<sup>274</sup> U.S. Department of Energy Country Analysis Briefing for China, July 2004. Available at <http://www.eia.doe.gov>.

<sup>275</sup> Xing. "China and China Asia," 156.

<sup>276</sup> Robert Ebel cited in Michael Lelyveld, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 2 – The Battle for Oil," (18 November 2004) *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty Online* <<http://www.rferl.org>> (accessed 15 January 2005).

<sup>277</sup> Lelyveld, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 2 – The Battle for Oil."

Siberian-based pipeline for China's energy needs. However, this Russian proposed project gradually succumbed to Russia's own Russia-first strategy. This is an indicator of the limits of Sino-Russian economic cooperation. Russia wants to control as much of the energy pipelines as possible, especially the natural gas infrastructure, for its own gains. In essence, Russia's energy policy is more collaborative than cooperative demonstrating the short-term nature of arrangements with other countries, especially China. When Russia began toying with the idea of developing a different transit route for Siberian energy resources to the Pacific Rim, which would provide additional customers (e.g. Japan and Korea), China recognized the limits of Russian-promised energy negotiations and sought its own path. Thus, China has renewed its bilateral engagement with Kazakhstan, which is attributable to Russian President Putin's failure to deliver on a "2001 pledge to build an oil pipeline from eastern Siberia to China's petroleum capital of Daqing."<sup>278</sup>

China's main target for securing access to Central Asian oil has been Kazakhstan. As of 2004, "Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian country that exports oil to China. Kazakh oil shipments to China, which are sent by rail, account for less than 1 percent of China's imports."<sup>279</sup> However, these exports may increase given Chinese efforts to secure a 1,000-kilometer pipeline from Kazakhstan's central Karaganda region to China's northwestern Xinjiang region by the end of 2005.<sup>280</sup> Additionally, China plans to extend the Karaganda pipeline further west toward Kazakhstan's Kenqiyaq oil field, in the Aqtobe region, on the Caspian Sea.<sup>281</sup> In total, Beijing has invested about \$1.3 billion so far, employing more than 12,000 Kazakh workers on Chinese-run projects throughout Kazakhstan.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Lelyveld, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 2 – The Battle for Oil."

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Since 1997, China has been working in conjunction with Kazakh state oil-and-gas company to modernize the Kenqiyaq oil field's infrastructure; spending an estimated \$ 1.3 billion and employing 12,000 Kazakh workers to support this modernization effort. For additional background information of the Kenqiyaq oil field cooperation between China and Kazakhstan and an overall Kazakh assessment of the oil and gas sector, see: "KazMunayGaz President Assesses Kazakhstani Petroleum Sector Developments," *Astana Kazakhstanskaya Pravda (Internet Version-WWW)* in Russian, 27 February 2004, FBIS Document ID: CEP20040315000440.

<sup>281</sup> Bransten, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview."

<sup>282</sup> Lelyveld, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 2 – The Battle for Oil."

CNPC acquired a 60 percent stake in the Kazakh oil firm Aktobemunaigaz, which included a pledge to invest significantly in the company's future development over the next twenty years. Prior to the 2000 SCO meeting in Tashkent, the Kazakh and Chinese governments' inked the most significant deal to date. The joint venture called "for the construction of a \$700-million pipeline to export Kazakh crude oil into western China. The pipeline would run from Atasu in central Kazakhstan to Xinjiang, supplying three refineries with about 200,000 bbl/d of crude oil."<sup>283</sup> Already there are purported to be 300,000 Chinese working on the pipeline in Kazakhstan, probably in an effort to reduce the unemployment caused by the privatization of the Chinese State Owned Enterprises.<sup>284</sup> China is also active in creating partnerships with Uzbekistan. China recently "offered to help Uzbekistan develop its small oil fields in the Ferghana Valley."<sup>285</sup> Additionally, China is committing foreign direct investments<sup>286</sup> in other Central Asian energy resource projects (e.g. hydroelectric) in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>287</sup>

China's foreign policy dealings within the SCO seemed to be on the track of using individual sidebar agreements to strike energy deals, thereby increasing its influence within the SCO. This was reflected during the Tashkent meeting when "China provided other [SCO] member states with \$900 million in preferential export and buyer's credits."<sup>288</sup> This supports the argument that China is seeking to use the SCO to harness

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<sup>283</sup> Department of Energy Country Analysis Briefing for China, July 2004.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. This is an interesting point because the ratio of Kazakh versus Chinese workers is 16:300 which may increase local tensions and fears of China having a negative impact on the Kazakh domestic economy in the future.

<sup>285</sup> Bransten, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview." For more details on recent Chinese-Uzbekistan political and economic cooperation, see: "Uzbek FM Pledges Closer Ties with China," *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 9 January 2004, FBIS Document ID: CPP20040109000052.

<sup>286</sup> For an overall review of the evolution of Chinese outward FDI, see: Hsiu-Ling Wu and Chien-Hsun Chen, "An Assessment of Outward Foreign Direct Investment from China's Transitional Economy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 8. (December 2001):1235-1254.

<sup>287</sup> See "Kyrgyzstani Trade Minister Outlines Investment Strategy," *Bishkek Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in Russian, 28 September 2004, FBIS Document ID: CEP20041101000283; and "Kyrgyzstani Premier: No 'Discriminating Features' Seen in SCO Structure," *Bishkek AKIpress (Internet Version-WWW)* in Russian, 27 September 2004, FBIS Document ID: CEP20040927000233.

<sup>288</sup> Du Yan and Qi Bin, "Xiong Guangkai Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Has Bright Future," *Beijing Zhongguo Xinwen She* in Chinese, 17 August 2004, FBIS Document ID: CPP20040817000197. General Xiong Guangkai, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army and president of the China International Strategy Society.

the enormous economic potential of the Central Asian Republics to secure its preeminence in the region. Furthermore, this also demonstrates the power causal variable in regime formation and maintenance.

### **3. The Outlook: Does China view the SCO as an International Economic Regime?**

China's economic agenda in the SCO and its energy interests in Central Asia are straightforward. Chinese business activities in Central Asia have been modest to date largely due to the legacy economic system and infrastructure within the former Soviet republics. Chinese business ventures associated with the development of XUAR have opened a gateway into Central Asia; however, there is still reluctance on the part of Chinese to sink financial resources into large regional multiparty projects. Instead, China has used the multilateral framework of the SCO to acquire and operate energy concerns throughout Central Asia.

Beijing's choice to operate bilaterally could demonstrate China's desire for pursuing a regional hegemonic policy over access to energy resources and energy transit routes outside of the SCO framework. This would put China in direct competition with Russia, Iran and India. In this case, if China's interest in the SCO is best described as an international economic regime, then Chinese policy actions should be characterized in either one of two ways. The SCO is an egoistical self-interested regime where China is not constrained from pursuing separate energy policies from the other members. Another potential characterization of China's dealings within the SCO as a regime, is based on political power. This approach would consider Chinese business activities as not promoting collective gains, but instead the SCO reflecting China's political power for enhancing its own economic growth through compulsory strategies to limit the choices of the Central Asian states.

However, when the SCO added Iran, India and Pakistan as observers in 2005, a dramatic change might have occurred in how the Chinese envisioned the future of the SCO as an international economic regime. This would indicate that in the future, the purpose of the SCO lies beyond a talk shop on energy pipeline routes, and thus, the Chinese recognize a collaborative effort is needed to pool resources in a long-term economic strategy. The neoliberalism approach would cite these actions as evidence of

growing economic interdependence because “states can no longer solve a number of issues through unilateral action alone. Common problems demand a pooling of resources and even the creation of regimes to facilitate cooperation.”<sup>289</sup>

#### **E. CHINESE SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA**

In the past, China has not seen the Central Asian states’ pursuit of security agreements with other states as a threat to their security (e.g. multilaterally within the CIS framework or bilaterally with NATO’s Partnership for Peace).<sup>290</sup> China recognizes that in order to maintain the stability and security in Central Asia, it would have to play a more active role with its new neighbors. The SCO is the vehicle for promoting Chinese security interests in Central Asia, by establishing institutional arrangements such as RATS, which also supports its domestic security interests in Xinjiang. This long-term view supports a shared common interest with like-minded conservative Central Asian political elites. However, the question remains as to whether the Chinese view such arrangements as providing for “collective security” or just facilitating its interests in Central Asia.

Omnibalancing would expect to see both external and domestic threats driving alignment choices for maintaining the status quo of the weak Central Asian regimes, and thus, the need for the SCO. China’s choice to highlight the internal nature of the threat from the “three forces” and foregoing bilateral security agreements with individual SCO members in its security strategy in Central Asia supports the view that China could potentially see the SCO as a concert. However, if the main Chinese perception of threat becomes external in nature (e.g. NATO Eastward expansion and the continued U.S. military presence in SCO member states) then one should reexamine the SCO as an alliance instead of a concert.

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<sup>289</sup> Kubicek, “Regionalism, Nationalism and Realpolitik in Central Asia,” 639.

<sup>290</sup> For one prospective on Chinese view of why these are not considered threats, see: Guancheng Xing, “Security Issues in China’s Relations with Central Asian States,” in *Ethnic Challenges beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perceptions of the Central Asian Conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian (London: Macmillan, 1998), 203-217. Guancheng Xing is a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of Eastern European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

## **1. Islamism and Separatism in Central Asia and Xinjiang**

Some have commented that while China’s quest for natural resources shapes China’s Central Asia policy, it does not accurately reflect the entire motivations behind China’s interests. Niklas Swanstrom, Executive Director of the Program for Contemporary Silk Road Studies at Sweden’s Uppsala University, agrees that the Chinese are interested in Central Asia’s natural resources:

They do want oil and gas because China is in desperate need of these as its economy grows. But it goes deeper than that. They want to secure the borders. They want to make sure that Central Asia is a stable region. Because if Central Asia runs into military conflicts, it is likely to spread over to Xinjiang, China’s westernmost province. And that would be a problem for the Chinese government. So part of this is to create stability in the Central Asia region because stability in Central Asia means stability for China. And also, it’s in the Chinese interest to develop these markets, to create the infrastructure in Central Asia.<sup>291</sup>

China has been able to tap into the Central Asian authoritarian regimes’ concerns about the rise in Islamic militancy. Areas for cooperation include “intelligence exchanges, police cooperation, training of police, training of military forces, and the design of military operations targeting terrorist activities.”<sup>292</sup>

The key to China’s security concerns is the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwestern China. This poorly developed area comprises one-sixth of China’s territory and borders Afghanistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan. The population of XUAR is approximately 16.6 million with its largest minority consisting of 7 million Uighurs, who are ethnic Turks and Muslims. XUAR also has demographic similarities with Central Asia, since the region also is home to 1 million Kazakhs and smaller amounts of Kyrgyz and Tajiks. The potential for ethnic unrest, political Islam and ideas of promoting separatism within the large minority communities makes Xinjiang a top priority in Chinese domestic security calculations.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Niklas Swanstrom cited in Bransten, ‘Central Asia: China’s Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview.’

<sup>292</sup> John Garver, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, cited in Bransten, “Central Asia: China’s Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview.”

<sup>293</sup> Xing. “China and China Asia,” 161-162.

The Chinese have always considered Xinjiang an inseparable part of its territory and the fight against separatism in this region has a long history dating back as early as the 1930s with the spread of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism.<sup>294</sup> Between 1998 and 1999, China began to use the SCO as a platform for increased cooperation to contain their separatist threat by tying it to larger regional instability issues within Central Asia. The 1998 SCO Almaty conference marked China's first expression of interests in developing a deeper partnership beyond political ties, including creating a new security environment. SCO members were deeply concerned over the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. China was able to leverage its concerns of the activities of dissident elements in Xinjiang from bases in Central Asia to form a joint SCO policy toward terrorists, extremists and separatists. Additionally, China sought to link counterterrorism efforts in South East Asia with those of the SCO to establish a security environment for their regional economic interests. However, this has little traction within the organization because other SCO members were interested in talks concerning revival of the “silk road” economy and cooperation in trade and investment, especially in the oil and natural gas sectors of the Central Asian economies. In 1999, when extremist elements penetrated into Kyrgyzstan from neighboring Afghanistan, China jumped at the chance to stress the urgency of the situation. At the 1999 SCO meeting in Bishkek, China's security issues came to the forefront of the SCO's agenda. China called for the crackdown on the forces of religious extremism and ethnic separatism, as well as international terrorist activities to which Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan all agreed was the primary threat facing the SCO members.

## **2. The Outlook: is SCO the Key to Securing Xinjiang?**

For China, the SCO not only serves an important role in its geostrategic policy calculations but also as a mechanism for promoting its economic development. However, China must first confront the complex security situation in Xinjiang and Central Asia, namely the activities of the “three forces”—terrorism, separatism and extremism—which the Chinese consider ferocious and rampant.<sup>295</sup> Those that take a pessimistic view of

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<sup>294</sup> For a historical review of how separatism flourished and was suppressed see Xing. “China and China Asia,” 161-163.

<sup>295</sup> Yan and Bin, “Xiong Guangkai Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Has Bright Future,” FBIS Document ID: CPP20040817000197.

China's interest in Central Asia and the SCO contend that China has shielded itself within the SCO's framework to combat charges of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang province. General Xiong Guangkai, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army, describes the security situation in Central Asia as "ferocious" and rife with the "three forces" of terrorism, extremism and separatism. In the future, he sees the SCO establishing consultant and emergency mechanisms for dealing with unexpected crises. Regional antiterrorist organizations and joint antiterrorist exercises are key mechanisms for cracking down on the "three forces" eradicating "drug smuggling, arms proliferation, and other criminal activities."<sup>296</sup>

China's behavior in executing its security interests in Xinjiang and Central Asia are neatly packaged within the SCO framework. The Chinese government's insistence that the SCO is not an alliance against any other state made the previous analysis a worthy case for exploring the omnibalancing approach with respect to domestic and international threat perceptions. Omnibalancing like balance of threat theory tells us that states pursue temporary alignment strategies. China's efforts in establishing and promoting the SCO RATS indicate that they are interested in long-term solutions for regional problems. However, the institutionalization of a security mechanism does not necessarily equate to full-scale collaboration on regional security issues. Instead, one should question whether the SCO RATS reflects an actual hardening of the SCO institutional itself. In this case, international regime theory would argue that the interaction of the SCO members reflects more coordination than cooperation, and thus, characterize the SCO as a regime for resolving dilemmas of common aversion (e.g. preventing outcomes, like regime change in the Central Asian states).

#### **F. ASSESSMENT OF CHINESE INTERESTS**

China's foreign policy and economic security in Central Asia will be shaped by its ability to adapt with flexibility and creativity in the post-Taliban environment. China will seek to expand its influence within the SCO to promote a multilateral regionalist approach. This approach can be defined as open-ended, rather than in narrowly defined security needs of the SCO member states. Thus, China has a large stake in seeking a

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<sup>296</sup> Yan and Bin, "Xiong Guangkai Says Shanghai Cooperation Organization Has Bright Future," FBIS Document ID: CPP20040817000197.

long-term guarantee for ensuring its access to the energy resources of Central Asia. But in this effort they are mindful of Russian historical ties, although they increasingly point to their two millennia cultural linkage with Central Asia. China views the U.S. military presence in Central Asia as a constraint on its foreign policy, either within the SCO or bilaterally with each state. Chinese fears and suspicions of an American presence in Central Asia range from encirclement to a destabilizing force.

China's new Central Asian posture is measured along four tracks. First, China has begun participating in regional organizations such as the SCO and ASEAN.<sup>297</sup> Second, by establishing the SCO, China has created a new strategic partnership with Russia and the Central Asian states through deepening bilateral and multilateral economic and security ties. Third, the SCO has allowed China to expand its regional economic agenda through increased access to the region's natural resources, mainly through bilateral agreements, in a space once considered Russia's backyard. Finally, the SCO offers China a mechanism to reduce the distrust and anxiety over state-to-state security concerns, while establishing a forum for addressing non-traditional threats. The weight of evidence in the overall assessment of China's interest in Central Asia indicates the economic variable is of primary importance in its foreign policy. This would likely indicate that China views the SCO as more of an international economic regime rather than a defensive alliance or a "concert" system

Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia also has strengths and weaknesses. China has been successful at cultivating new economic and security relationships within the SCO, but limitations and constraints remain on the level of cooperation going forward. Economically, Premier Wen's portrayal of China as a "friendly elephant" interested only in win-win commercial ties with its neighbors has met with some skepticism. Michael Vatikiotis contends that some Asian nations worry that an elephant, no matter how friendly, will still leave trampled grass in its path.<sup>298</sup> The specter of "creeping sinicization" has created a "latent fear, especially in the countries bordering China, that Beijing is hungry for land. And if that is the case, even a small immigration of Chinese to

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<sup>297</sup> For details on how China has increased its participation in regional organizations see Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia," 73-78.

<sup>298</sup> Michael Vatikiotis, "A Too Friendly Embrace," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 17, 2004: 15-18.

the region would swamp the local populations.”<sup>299</sup> Such fears have circulated within Kyrgyzstan’s populace as well as within the Russian political elite, questioning China’s long-term motivations in Central Asia and the Russian Far East.

While Beijing has denied any aspirations of a land grab in Central Asia, others look to China’s historical record of past actions. Murat Auezov, the former Kazakh ambassador to China was less than diplomatic when expressing his concerns over China’s growing influence in Central Asia. He said:

I know Chinese culture. We should not believe anything the Chinese politicians say ... As a historian; I’m telling you that 19th-century China, 20th-century China and 21st-century China are three different Chinas. But what unites them is a desire to expand their territories.<sup>300</sup>

This observation underscores that while the Central Asian states are attracted to China’s economic miracle of achieving rapid modernization without sacrificing political control, Chinese motivations may turn questionable in the future.<sup>301</sup> Martha Brill Olcott sums up these lingering concerns as follows:

At the same time, though, the Central Asians fear any appeal the Chinese make in the spirit of “kinship,” since the region’s precolonial [sic] history is punctuated by invasions from the East. Help given in the name of ethnic Asian solidarity is attractive only if it carries no accompanying threat of conquest or neo-imperialist control.<sup>302</sup>

Swanstrom counters this assertion of a looming Chinese threat to Central Asia by taking a more optimistic view. He argues that while Russia continues to enjoy a decisive cultural

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<sup>299</sup> Bransten, “Central Asia: China’s Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview.”

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Specifically, some have argued that China’s unilateral approach toward its military modernization is being undertaken without great concern for the interests of its neighbors. However, China has successfully offset some of these fears by pursuing other bilateral and multilateral approaches to alleviate regional anxieties. One such avenue is the SCO through which China has established a separate bilateral governmental security dialogue. China also is engaging the SCO and other regional neighbors through official military-to-military exchanges, including joint exercises. However, the question remains as to whether the Chinese see the SCO as their primary choice for a regional cooperative security community for Central Asia while pursuing a similar multilateral track in the Asia-Pacific through the ARF. See Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia,” 85. Also see David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>302</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States: Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996): 35.

and economic advantage in Central Asia, the key to breaking Russia's monopoly may lie with the Central Asian states:

It doesn't necessarily have to be a zero-sum game, but from the Central Asian states, there's also interest in decreasing the Russian influence and to have Chinese influence -- maybe even Indian influence and American influence and European influence ... They have realized over the years that it's not good to have one dominant power in the region. They don't want it to be the Chinese or the Russians. They're trying to diversify the influence over the region, and they are very conscious about the fact that neither the Russians nor the Chinese would be the perfect actor to dominate the region.<sup>303</sup>

This also underscores the point that the SCO in its totality should not be considered a defensive alliance aimed at the U.S. The Central Asian states while economically and militarily weaker than Russia and China do have independent choices to make at every juncture of the SCO's development. The SCO has yet to constrain any of these states from acting independently, at least bilaterally with the U.S.<sup>304</sup>

The "Shanghai Spirit" associated with the SCO is described as a partnership and not an alliance. The cooperation among SCO members as equals and the setting up of the SCO RATS and Secretariat, a hardening of the institutional framework, is indicative of international regime behavior. However, this partnership may well speak to coordination instead. This would produce a regime for resolving dilemmas of common aversion. But in light of the fact that the Chinese have sought to regulate state behavior of the member states by establishing a formal institutional arrangement lends more to the SCO being a regime created to solve dilemmas of common interests, particularly in the security arena through the establishment of RATS. The economic agenda of the SCO as a regime has yet to fully develop, as evidenced by both Russia and China pursuing bilateral economic arrangements with each other and the Central Asian republics. If the SCO is an international economic regime then any changes to the regime should be examined through an analysis of the egoistic self-interest and political power causal variables to determine if the underlining principles for the SCO's creation have changed.

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<sup>303</sup> Niklas Swanstrom, cited in Bransten, "Central Asia: China's Mounting Influence, Part 1 -- An Overview."

<sup>304</sup> A recent exception maybe Uzbekistan's decision to call for withdrawing U.S. military forces from K2 airbase after at the 2005 SCO Summit.

China is very bullish on the prospects for the SCO. China's economic prowess and ability to infuse large amounts of capital into the Central Asian economies has given it the leading role in the development of the SCO at Russia's expense. China's ability to offer short-term economic gains to the Central Asian states has forced Russian President Putin to rethink economic privatization in Russia. To combat China's growing economic instrument of power, Putin has had to rein in and harness the post-communist privatized "commanding height" industries. Putin has been forced to use the state apparatus as the mechanism to ensure political influence and economic access to Central Asia resources, especially oil and gas. A potential Chinese economic juggernaut will force Russia to design its own bilateral relationship with the Central Asian Republics, while China bathes in the role of dictating the direction and policies of the SCO.

## **VI. ASSESSMENT OF THE SCO AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES**

### **A. NOT A NEW “GREAT GAME”**

At this time, one cannot presently classify the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as either a paper tiger or a regional powerhouse, because the current status and its future potential rests somewhere in the middle. Instead, the SCO resembles a mixture of an international regime and a concert. In 2001 Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to avert common threats from revisionist regimes in Central Asia, to demilitarize the borders of its members, and achieve long-term economic growth through increased cooperation between the countries, formed the SCO. The inclusion of India, Pakistan and Iran in 2005 renewed speculation over a new “Great Game” in Central Asia. While this notion is superficially attractive, a deeper analysis was needed in order to determine what is driving Russian and Chinese interests in Central Asia. In particular, the SCO suggests that Russian and Chinese geopolitical and geoeconomic interests and strategic implications are important, but knowing their importance does not provide sufficient insight into how the two countries define these interests.<sup>305</sup>

By examining how Russia and China view their interests in Central Asia, this thesis has provided a comprehensive assessment of Russian and Chinese interests in the SCO. The results were contradictory. For Russia, its interests in the SCO are driven by its identity. Central to that identity, Russia is both a great power and the Eurasian bridge between the East and West. In this light, Russia’s interest in the SCO should be considered only as a means for them to try once again of achieving great power status. China’s interests on the other hand are material. China’s participation in the SCO is driven by its energy concerns with a long-term goal of achieving economic security. However, a U.S. presence in Central Asia has complicated both Russia’s and China’s

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<sup>305</sup> Geopolitics and geoeconomics still play a role in the triangle of Russia, China, and the U.S. relations inside and outside of Central Asia. Kazakhstan plays a huge role in this triangle of competing interest. China has once again turned to Kazakhstan for an area of investment following the failed attempt by the Chinese government-controlled oil giant, China National Offshore Oil Co. (CNOOC) Ltd, to acquire the U.S.-based Unocal. See Alec Appelbaum, ‘Rebuffed by Washington, China goes Prospecting in Kazakhstan,’ *Eurasia Insight* (15 August 2005). Available from *Eurasianet.Org* <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/eav081505ru.shtml>> (accessed 18 August 2005).

pursuit of these interests, while the regional events of 2005 have further added to the complexities of the security, stability and developmental situation for the Central Asian regimes. In theoretical terms, which were developed in Chapter Two, this suggests that Russia and China see the SCO as a means to avert common problems and a way for them to pursue common interests. On balance, the evidence suggests that the SCO's future is leaning toward a concert, but if both states' achieve economic interdependence in the region and bilaterally become more significant, it might evolve into a regime.

## **B. ANALYSIS OF THE THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE SCO**

Neorealists, using balance of threat and omnibalancing theories, can make the case that the SCO is a temporary coalition (e.g. alliance or concert) based on perceptions of threat from internal and external actors. Neoliberalism can make the case that the SCO represents an effort to institutionalize longer-term cooperation in order to solve dilemmas of common interests. Evidence presented in this thesis supports both schools' assumptions about the SCO and Russian and Chinese behavior. However, social constructivism suggests that Russia's and China's identities shape how they perceive their interests in Central Asia, thus what is driving their interests and their primary motivations toward the SCO. Because these identities are different, Russia and China have different motivations for building the SCO. These differences suggest that over time the security portfolio of the SCO may collapse, while economic cooperation may persist.

### **1. Anti-U.S. Alliance**

Originally, the SCO was formed to avert common threats from revisionist regimes in Central Asia, to demilitarize the borders of its members, and achieve long-term economic growth through increased cooperation between the countries. These issues remain valid today. However, some have speculated that China and Russia have larger plans for the modern SCO. In particular, "to counter U.S. policies of economic penetration of the oil-rich Caspian Basin and to facilitate a global balance of power through a multi-polar order that would frustrate U.S. hegemonic goals."<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Dr. Maqbool Ahmad Bhatty: "Role of the Shanghai-5," *Karachi Dawn* (Internet version-WWW) in English, 16 June 2000, FBIS Document ID: SAP20000716000029.

The joint Sino-Russian exercise “Peace Mission 2005” raises fresh concerns of the SCO becoming a defensive alliance against the U.S. While this exercise was not under the guise of the SCO, the new SCO observers sent representatives. Some suggest that Russia and China are flexing their muscles showing they are capable of assuming a larger security role in Central Asia and the Pacific Rim. Others contend that it is an opportunity for Russia to sell arms for cash that its country needs, while the Chinese can get training and sensitive technologies from Russia, activities pursued with the aim of balancing the U.S. influence in the region.<sup>307</sup>

## **2. SCO as a Reflection of Collective Identities**

The SCO does not reflect a collective identity interest by each of its members. Each state has different reactions to regional and international events. Over its history, the Central Asian SCO members have supported U.S. foreign policy actions, despite hesitation or suspicion of these actions from Moscow or Beijing. Individual states have chosen to pursue bilateral relations with the U.S. in opposition to SCO summit rhetoric, which demonstrates a lack of a group consciousness. Thus, the SCO should not be considered as an identity driven interest, collective security community or an example of the development of a collective regional identity.

## **3. The SCO as an International Regime**

All SCO member states recognize the importance of regional cooperation and interdependence in meeting the challenges of regional security, long-term economic cooperation and increased cultural ties. Today, the SCO members show some characteristics of economic and security interdependence, however, this does not mean the SCO presently reflects an international economic regime despite the hardening of its

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<sup>307</sup> See: Daisy Sindelar, “Russia/China: Beijing Announces Joint Military Exercises With Russia,” (14 December 2004). Available from *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty* Online <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 18 August 2005); Antoine Blua, “Russia/China: Military Exercises Underscore Growing Ties,” (5 August 2005). Available from *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty* Online <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 18 August 2005); and Claire Bigg, “Russia/China: Joint Military Exercise A Result Of New Strategic Partnership,”(18 August 2005). Available from *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty* Online <<http://www.rferl.org/>> (accessed 18 August 2005). Daisy Sindelar is a senior editor in the News and Current Affairs Department in Prague. Antoine Blua is a RFE/RL correspondent in Prague specializing in Central Asia. Claire Bigg is RFE/RL's Moscow correspondent.

institutional framework. The most tangible economic results of these meetings have been the bilateral economic arrangements worked out between the countries in side bar, state-to-state meetings.

Both Russia and China look at Central Asia and the multilateralism of the SCO as bright spots in their foreign policies. However, economically the SCO represents a contradiction. For all the talk about regional stability, security and development, the SCO, as an international economic regime, has been inefficient at pooling resources. Discussions for creating a Central Asia Development Bank are just that. The Central Asian states, as well as Russia and China do not have the capital currently to conduct such an enterprise. Other international organizations such as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development continue to provide funds for Central Asian regional projects.<sup>308</sup> Russia and China are very adaptive and resourceful countries, however taking on such an effort based on Western models might prove to be too problematic to execute in the short run through the SCO. Thus, bilateral relations among the member states will continue to be the primary means of interaction on cooperative issues, while the SCO's multilateralism should be viewed as coordination.

Neoliberals expect that the reduction in transactions costs, uncertainty and increased ability for issue linkage that arise from the establishment of an international regime will generate a sustained demand for the continuance of the regime, so long as the long-term net gains of participating in the regime are greater than the short-term net gains of not participating. In other words, neoliberals believe that institutionalized cooperation is self-reinforcing because the existence of international regimes increases the gains from cooperation and decreases the costs of doing so. If there is no common interest in cooperating in the first place then you will not get a regime. The neorealist critique of regime formation and maintenance, tell us one should expect cooperation and the regime

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<sup>308</sup> For example, see: Ahmed. Rashid "Russia, China warily Watch for American Intrusions in Central Asia," *Eurasia Insight* (3 May 2005). Available from *Eurasianet.Org* <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav050302.shtml>> (12 September 2005).

to last as long as Russian and Chinese interests continue to overlap. Promoting regional security against the “three evils”—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—has been the primary motivation for all SCO members in the short-term.<sup>309</sup>

Both countries see a common aversion problem in the three evils. But they do not agree on whether a genuine “collective security regime” is required. This is what one would expect from coordination problems: regimes are not necessary because, a more informal means of coordinating policies are available. The real question that all of this raises is whether China sees security issues as a coordination problem or a cooperation problem. If this is fact the case, as suggested, then the prospects for the SCO’s longevity diminish, as Russia and China are not even in agreement on how to define the situation. Empirically, this lends support to the concert idea, where the SCO is a temporary ad hoc alliance against internal threats.

#### **4. A Concert: Intervention in Central Asia**

Russian, Chinese and Central Asian leaders have declared at the SCO summit meetings that they are facing similar threats to the status quo from the “Three Evils”—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—generated by militant Islamic radical forces.<sup>310</sup> The argument for viewing the SCO as a “concert” rests on whether internal stability is the glue holding the SCO together. The merit of this approach is that it enables analysts to assess the durability of such a basis for cooperation. However, the SCO members emphasis on cooperation against common threats may be little more than agreements based upon a coordination games rather than collaboration games., in which each member may place limits on the extent to which a state would allow or request aid to combat its perceived threats to its domestic environment or conditions.

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<sup>309</sup> See: Song Zongli and Sha Dati, “Li Zhaoxing Expounds on China's Stance at Shanghai Cooperation Organization Foreign Ministers Meeting,” *Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* in Chinese, 4 June 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050604000121; and Nikolay Sergeyev interview with Kazakhstan's Security Council Secretary Bolat Utemuratov, “Responding to the challenges of the century,” *Astana Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (Internet Version-WWW) in Russian, 2 June 05, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050608033046.

<sup>310</sup> For example, see: “Text of Jiang Speech at 5 Nation Meeting,” *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 3 July 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980703000219; and “Text of 5 Nation Meeting Joint Statement,” *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 3 July 1998, FBIS Document ID: FTS19980703000872.

From the concert view, the SCO should persist so long as the powers involved share a perception of a common threat. This differs from Walt only in that the threat in the concert view is not external, but internal, in the form of domestic groups—whatever their transnational support network, be it democracy activists or the “three evils”—that seek to overthrow the government. Thus, the SCO should not be considered a collective security regime, but merely an ad hoc alliance against internal threats. If Russia and China continue to disagree on how to deal with those threats, the SCO will fall apart, or cease to have any security portfolio.

The first test of the concept of the SCO as a “concert” system which demonstrates that security crises are handled through coordination rather than cooperation was how the SCO and its members reacted to the ouster of the Akayev regime in Kyrgyzstan in Spring 2005.<sup>311</sup> As the crises unfolded, the SCO RATS principals met in an unscheduled meeting in Tashkent on March 30, 2005. The members’ inability to reach a consensus or plan of action demonstrated the limits of security cooperation within the SCO, especially between Russia and China.<sup>312</sup>

Russia and China held opposite positions on whether or not to use the SCO during the Akayev regime ouster. According to one source, the Chinese prepared for military intervention in Kyrgyzstan with the justification of protecting its citizens living in Bishkek.<sup>313</sup> Chinese President Hu Jintao is alleged to have demanded a resolution allowing the SCO to act as the mechanism for establishing military order in Bishkek. At the same time, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing directly contacted his foreign minister counterparts requesting an emergency session of the SCO.<sup>314</sup> Russia instead

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<sup>311</sup> For more on SCO members reaction to unrest in Kyrgyzstan, see: “SCO Secretary General Calls for Restoring Public Security in Kyrgyzstan,” *Moscow ITAR-TASS* in English, 25 March 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050325000017; “Akayev Denies Resigning as Parliament Meets in Capital,” *Beijing China Daily* (Internet Version-WWW) in English, 26 March 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050326000003; “Stability in Kyrgyzstan Important for the Country and the Central Asia, Official,” *Beijing Xinhua* in English, 25 March 2005, FBIS Document ID: CPP20050325000128; “Kazakhstan, China to Boost Cooperation of Shanghai Organization Over Kyrgyzstan Events,” *Almaty Interfax-Kazakhstan* in Russian, 29 March 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050329000287.

<sup>312</sup> “SCO Group Meeting: Terror Still Security Threat,” *Tashkent Uzbek Radio Youth Channel* in Uzbek, 30 March 2005, FBIS Document ID: CEP20050330000232.

<sup>313</sup> “China Sought Military Intervention at the Time of Kyrgyzstan ‘Revolution’,” *Tokyo Foresight* in Japanese 16 April 2005, p 30, FBIS Document ID: JPP20050422000067.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

“showed a cautious stance toward China’s moves against a former Soviet Union country. It is said the emergency meeting was never held, and the Chinese military’s intervention was never realized.”<sup>315</sup>

If the purported Chinese plan is true, then Russian hesitancy in allowing Chinese military intervention shows the limits of the SCO’s security arrangement and the narrow degree to which Russia and China share any common interests; either in ends or in means. Russian identity as the true security manager of Central Asia states would have been on the line. Especially on the heels of international accusations of meddling in the post-election outcomes in Georgia and Ukraine, the Kremlin leadership was reluctant to get involved in the elections of a sovereign state, especially with such a strong OSCE and NATO presence in the region. Based on this interpretation of events, the SCO is not collective security regime but merely an ad hoc alliance against internal threats and that if Russia and China continue to disagree on what means to use to deal with those threats, the SCO will fall apart, or cease to have any security portfolio.

The pace at which the Akayev regime was overthrown appears to have taken the SCO members off guard. One might speculate on how Russia or China might react to a similar situation in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan. However, it might also depend upon whether the authoritarian regimes in Astana and Tashkent are willing to seek relief from Moscow and Beijing—moves that would further expose the limits of their shaky power base. A similar situation in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan in the future might produce a different outcome, and an intervention response for Russia and potentially China, but not necessarily in a cooperative effort.

## 5. 2005 and Beyond

Today, the economic benefits and interdependence associated with reviving the new “silk road” economy has prospects for success. However, the stability of the SCO and frictions lay elsewhere. The true test and potential limits for the SCO and its members will be how well they understand and uphold their declared respect for state

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<sup>315</sup> “China Sought Military Intervention at the Time of Kyrgyzstan ‘Revolution’,” FBIS Document ID: JPP20050422000067.

sovereignty and borders as well as the conditions under which military intervention is appropriate, if needed. This demonstrates that the SCO seems at present more like a concert, and that this concert may not last given the lack of mutual understanding.

### C. FUTURE U.S. AND THE SCO RELATIONS

The future scope of U.S. interactions with the SCO and U.S. bilateral relations with SCO member states lay in five areas. First, Central Asia now has three uniquely different multilateral organizations operating under the guise of security: NATO with its Partnership for Peace program, CIS CSTO, and the SCO RATS. The current security situation and atmosphere in Central Asia, as well as Afghanistan remains volatile. Regional political, security and economic crises can quickly and easily be upset by perceived threats emanating either internally or externally to the region. In the future, the task is to identify areas in which these three multilateral organizations relations will produce cooperation, competition, or conflict.

Second, and closely linked with the first, is how the U.S. force structure and use of Central Asian infrastructure plays out. While Russia and China may seek a more active posture for the SCO as part of the regional security framework, the question remains as to how the Central Asian states view the U.S. presence. After 9/11, the U.S. military presence was clearly seen as a symbol of anti-terrorism cooperation and to some extent protecting the status quo leadership and governance of Central Asia. However, after the events in Andijon, one might argue that the U.S. is now seen as a symbol of color revolutions and as a revisionist upsetting the delicate status quo. These perceptions of U.S. foreign policy will influence how Russia, China, and the Central Asian states react to crises and will determine the likelihood of cooperation, competition, and conflict.

Third, U.S. policy makers should consider what rules or frameworks exist for intervention in the event of another colored revolution, regime change, or other regional security or economic crisis. Here the signals are important. The SCO members were completely taken aback by the pace of events in Kyrgyzstan. Neither China nor Russia intervened. The question of why has been speculated on but has not been answered yet. The 2005 SCO summit communiqué indicated that the military presence of one SCO state in another SCO country should be worked out within the CIS CSTO or SCO RATS.

This provides both Russia and China a vehicle to intervene in Central Asia, except that China is subject to a Russian veto in the SCO RATS, but not the other way around if Russia chooses to use the CIS CSTO. Key areas to monitor are whether Russia and China, as well as the CIS CSTO and SCO RATS characterize the threat, as either internally or externally based. Russian and Chinese political elites, military officers and scholars have characterized the threat of the “Three Evils”—international terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism—as being externally based originating from the Middle East through Afghanistan. Thus, the stated position of Russia and China in promoting a multi-polar world and an insistence of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state might be quickly left out of foreign policy choices. After the ouster of President Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, some have argued that the “Tulip” revolution was not a colored revolution at all, but simple regime change. Moscow’s reaction to this event can be characterized in three ways. First, they were unprepared and ill equipped to act as a rapid reaction force. Second, the Kremlin was gun shy in the aftermath of the 2005 Ukrainian presidential election results. Finally, Moscow may not have even considered the event as a regime change at all, but instead accepted of the outcome as new Kyrgyz leadership which they could easily work with and maintain the business as usual status quo.

The leadership in the Kremlin has a great wealth of recent Russian experience with political crises and intervention in sovereign states dating back to the Cold War. The trend in this history seems to be less military intervention as a rule. China, although it did have economic ties in Kyrgyzstan, also restrained itself from intervention in the Akayev political crisis. However, future events may pose a new set of calculations and expected reactions, especially if similar situations were to occur in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan.<sup>316</sup> Islamic militant groups such as the IMU and HT are the main perceived threats to regime stability by Uzbekistan, Russia, and China. Moscow may proceed cautiously in its approach. The Kremlin’s desire to have Tashkent beholden to it and its ability to leverage assistance based on this concession might prove to be a reason why Russian political and military leadership would opt to intervene based on the CIS CSTO,

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<sup>316</sup> In Uzbekistan’s case, while not a member of the CIS CSTO, it may be only able to turn to Russia for help.

while keeping the Chinese and the SCO RATS out of play. Kazakhstan is a more problematic case for both Russia and China. Russia has described its “Southern Tier” with Kazakhstan as separate from the rest of Central Asia. This is a key distinction, because the large number of Russian minorities living in Northern Kazakhstan mattered considerably during the policy debates during the 1990s. Any threat to the stability of the Kazakh regime would threaten Russia’s core “Eurasianist” identity and political and economic security. Chinese economic interests, large infrastructure investments, and the large number of Chinese in the country also make direct Chinese military intervention more likely. Any regime crisis in Kazakhstan has the potential for creating a chaotic situation that would test the limits of Sino-Russian cooperation, produce competition and even conflict resolution. Such a scenario might be the ultimate test of whether the SCO is an international regime when the two driving factors behind regional cooperation between Russia and China collide.

Fourth, the SCO identifies itself as a regional organization among bordering states. It is only natural to see the SCO reaching out to its neighbors in South Asia and elsewhere for supporting its long-term goals of producing cooperation and reducing sources of tension and competition. There are not any guarantees that the addition of the new observer states constitutes an SCO enlargement. The countries granted observer status in 2005 reflect the maintenance of long standing strategic partnerships, whether Russia with India and Iran or China with Pakistan. Nevertheless, the addition of two nuclear powers with a third with nuclear aspirations does bear watching and further analysis.

Finally, based on the foregoing analysis the U.S. should not view Sino-Russian cooperation in the SCO as a defensive alliance against the U.S. The U.S. should engage the SCO whenever possible. There are many areas for cooperation, such as counter terrorism, promoting stability and security for regional development, and counter proliferation efforts. The U.S. does not need to join the SCO as a full-time member. Instead, the U.S. should seek a partnership status, similar to that of NATO’s Partnership for Peace. In such a scenario, the U.S. might press to be a SCO partner for regional security issues (e.g. anti-terrorism or counter nuclear proliferation), as well as energy security.

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